

history

Marlene's Mountain History Archive Histories of Mountain Travels Neil Wiley

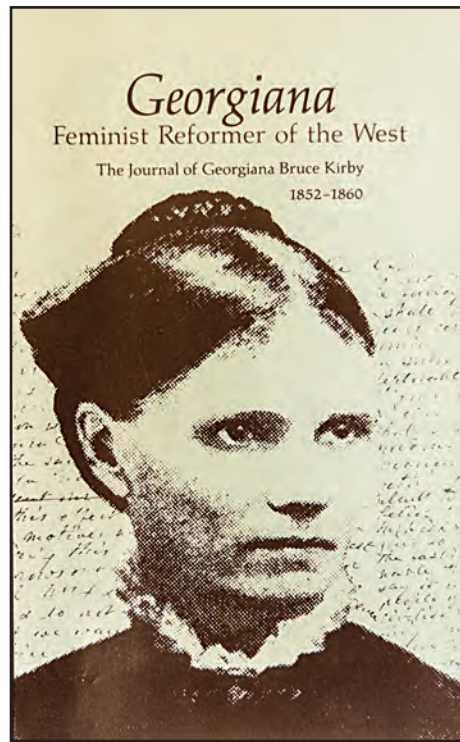
I think you will agree that living in the mountains is different from the valley. It was always this way. Valley people live in the pit. We live in the hills. They are urban. We are rural. They live close together. We are spread out. They walk to the store. We must drive.

This difference is reflected in many mountain histories. People who lived here needed to travel—by foot, wagon, train, or car. To get there required a trail, road, train track, or highway. How we got there was important.

Marlene's Mountain History Archive includes several books that show how we traveled.

From the book *The Ohlone Way*: "The two Ohlone women now head away from the crest of the hills down the side of a ridge, and follow the path alongside a tiny creek. The path is wide enough only for one person, but is well worn, stamped into the ground by thousands of footsteps. The mother had followed her mother along this same trail. And her mother had followed her grandmother. It had been so from very ancient times."

The book *Georgiana* is a journal of a local feminist reformer. She was a friend of Eliza Farnham, who came to our area from the east in 1850. Georgiana says that "Santa



Cruz was then one of the most isolated, hard-to-reach regions of the entire state. There were no bridges to link the generally poor roads, and as yet no clear path over the mountains. That situation was remedied in part by Eliza herself, when she became one of the first Yankees to cross the summit to the Santa Clara Valley on a wagon trail." Farnham Road was named for her.

The book *Perilous Trails, Dangerous Men* reported many stagecoach robberies, including one near the summit that involved Mountain Charley in 1874. A Concord coach was slowly coming up the

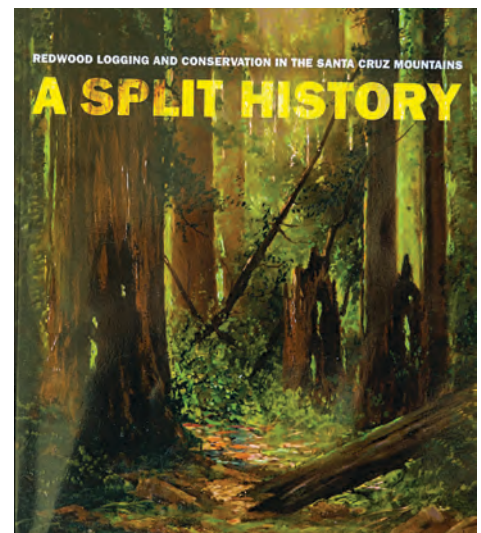
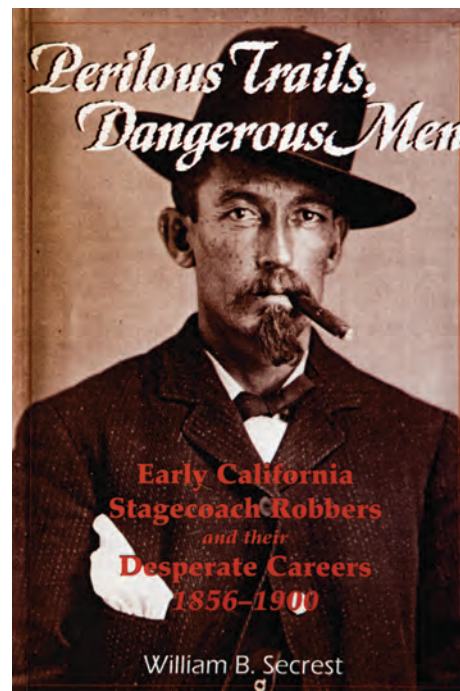
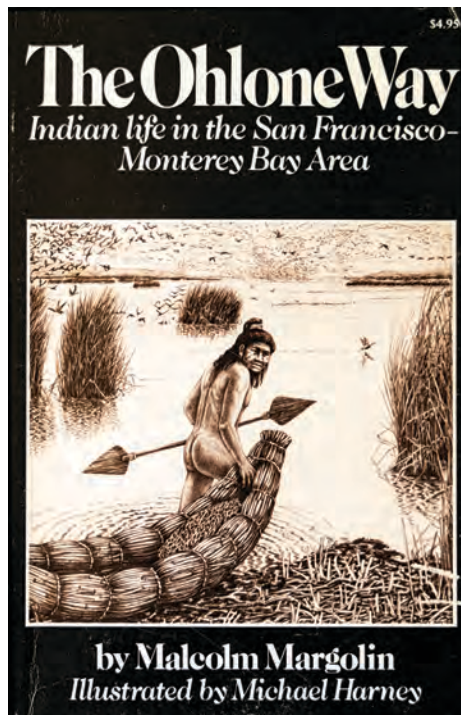
grade when two masked men carrying shotguns demanded passengers' wallets, then watches, then coins. They wanted more, but the horses were getting restless, and couldn't be held back.

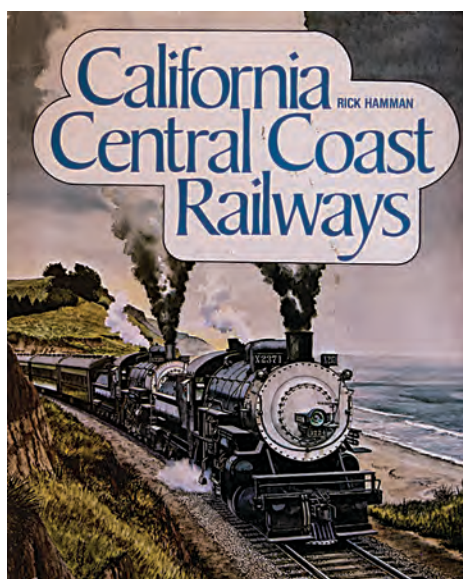
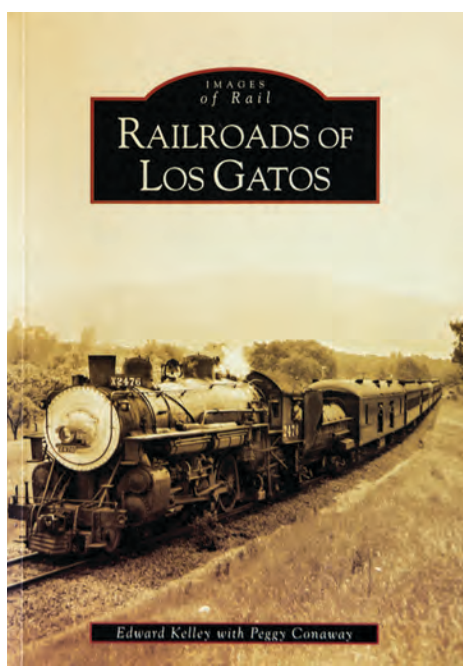
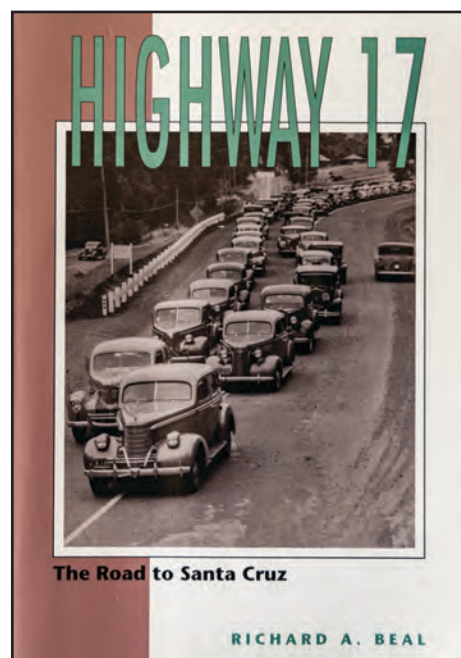
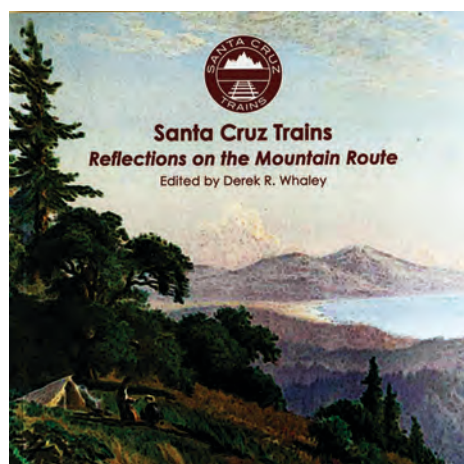
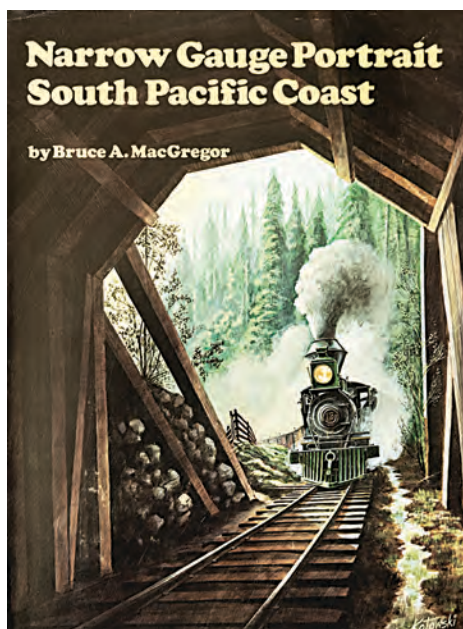
A deputy recruited Mountain Charley and his Henry rifle to help catch the bandits. The posse found them in an old barn near Jones Road. Several shots were fired, but Mountain Charley's rifle was the only one that met its mark: the bandit leader's arm. The fugitives soon surrendered.

A Split History devotes a chapter to Laurel, F.A. Hihn's company town. The chapter reports that the location of the Summit Tunnel was obvious. In 1878, the president of the railroad wanted Hihn's timber to build his railroad. Hihn wanted the railroad to haul his timber from his sawmill to market. It was a successful arrangement for both, especially after the 1906 earthquake required the rebuilding of San Francisco. The train's success came from hauling freight from sawmills, orchardists, and farmers. It also carried passenger traffic to and from Santa Cruz and San Jose, with some periods of highly profitable picnic outings to Wright's Station.

No person has done more to publicize the South Pacific Coast Railroad than author/historian Bruce MacGregor. The Mountain History Archive has three of his big, beautiful, autographed books: 368-page *South Pacific Coast* (1968), 187-page *Narrow Gauge Portrait, South Pacific Coast* (1975), and the 672-page *The Birth of California Narrow Gauge* (2003), a magnum opus covering the technology of narrow-gauge railroads in Northern California.

Bruce MacGregor led a group of local train lovers, including me, on a walk on the rails from Felton to Santa Cruz. In 1982, he published *A Centennial South Pacific Coast*.





My historian wife, Marlene, convinced him to speak at a Mountain History Study Group before the biggest audience in the group's history.

Despite the high cost of accidents and repairs, MacGregor says that no component of the rail and real-estate program ever incurred an operating loss. In his first book, he says "In fact, the alliance proved the South Pacific Coast to be one of the best-paying eighty-mile railroads in the state."

MacGregor also encouraged other train lovers to write books, including Rick Hamman's 309-page *California Central Coast Railways*, Derek Whaley's 64-page *Santa Cruz Trains, Reflections on the Mountain Route*, and Edward Kelley and Peggy Conaway's 126-page picture book, *Railroads of Los Gatos*.

MacGregor encouraged Rick Hamman and his neighbor Mike Hart to rebuild our mountain railroad. They were making progress until an anti-railroad group spread the fake news that the railroad would be funded by making Highway 17 a toll road.

Speaking of Highway 17, our history archive has Richard Beal's second edition of *Highway 17, The Road to Santa Cruz*, published in 1990. This 212-page book offers a few pages of general-area history, followed by a series of quick profiles of

neighborhoods near the highway. This is followed by chapters on early transportation routes, highway construction, possible future improvements and changes, and transportation alternatives. A series of appendices present a technical description of the highway, maintenance, safety equipment, solving individual problems, descriptions of alternative routes, services, accident and traffic-density patterns, emergency services, area maps, and references.

The book is good reading, but after more than 30 years, some details have changed. What hasn't changed? Caltrans continues to make improvements, but drivers still drive too fast and don't pay attention.

We have returned to walking. Heavy traffic, aging infrastructure, pandemics, and fewer community activities have encouraged many people to go outside. More of us are on neighborhood streets and local pathways or going on longer hikes in parks and open-space preserves. Our history archive has books about that, too.



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Karla Ramos, owner

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