THE GREAT EAST RIVER BRIDGE/1883-1983 at the Brooklyn Museum (March 19-September 4, 1983) was extraordinary, satisfying, complex, fun, and, to use the oldest buzz-word of our field, interdisciplinary. Indeed, it approached American society from as many different angles of attack as are represented at a good ASA convention. As artists have known since the bridge was a-building, the great artifact studied carefully can tell all about us, who we are, how we dream and how we analyze, where we see and where we’re blind. It can tell all this if we ask it the right questions—"Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question": this great show asked great questions.

Museologists worry about trying to do too much; they are afraid of making viewers read long cards or labels. The creators of many art shows for which I have consulted have concluded that it’s best to stress just one strong idea. Too much labeling, too much recorded lecturing and, they fear, people will fail to "see." But the Brooklyn Bridge is an extraordinary document of a number of different things, and the designers of this exhibition bravely decided not to shy away from telling more than one story. They showed technical documents, explained construction techniques, put out the tools for visitors to see, included architects’ renderings, photos, paintings, sculpture, literature; we saw the bridge in many stages and from many spatial and conceptual perspectives. The viewer who spent time in the show came away with a sense of the bridge as an important landmark in American urban history, in national self-consciousness and in the sense of manifest destiny; a sense, too, of the bridge and the human spirit, of self-confidence; of the somewhat more familiar, but still moving story of the Roeblings themselves; of the interface between social and technological history. The show tells who built the bridge and how it was done, who got killed and whose lives depended on the work the bridge provided, whose were changed by the link it provided between cities. When one sees artists’ fascination with the way those famous cables fractionate reality and make force and tension visible, one almost concludes that the Brooklyn Bridge caused analytical cubism, the "force lines" in 20th-century American painters, even abstraction itself. The show is admirable for not talking down to its audience. Neither does the book (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983, $35.00), which earnestly tries to brief us on what condition the mighty bridge is in, and whether it can be maintained (Good; and, You bet!); the construction history, the Roeblings, the history of transportation in the area, urban design, films which use the bridge, what it has meant to artists. It’s splendid stuff, and keeps the show in mind: engineering drawings, tools, diagrams, photos, paintings, sculpture, power and gaiety—such as Red Grooms' preposterous 1976 warped enormous bright distorted sculpture "Brooklyn Bridge," with its toothpaste-tube-squished oriental freighter sailing beneath warped-grid cables, and this mad cat, over-sized, careening down the deck on his blue bicycle. Like the very successful and ambitious show, the book richly rewarded every additional ten minutes one spent with it. One wishes the show were as permanent.

J. Bunker Clark says that AMERICAN MUSIC RECORDINGS: A Discography of 20th-Century U.S. Composers, edited by Carol J. Oja (Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1982, $60.00), is a valuable reference source for those incorporating American music in their courses. It deals with "art" music by some 1300 (!) composers such as Bernstein, Carter, Gershwin, Ives. The foreword by composer William Schuman points out the dismal record of commercial companies in issuing new music—even worse in keeping the little they do issue in print.

Lillian Schlissel just loves COVERED WAGON WOMEN: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1840-1890 (Volume 1, 1840-1849. Edited by Kenneth L. Holmes. Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark, 1983. $25.00). She writes, "It is rare to find emotion in scholarly writing but the affection that shines through this text must bring pleasure to readers who have even once felt a
spark of interest in the remarkable women who made the overland journey. This is the first of ten volumes to be issued, and is viewed by Holmes as a continuation of the work of Clifford M. Drury, whose 3-volume _First White Women Over the Rockies_ was also published by Clark in 1963.

_Covered Wagon Women_ contains twelve entries written between 1840 and 1849, some by women we may be familiar with—Elizabeth Dixon Smith and Patty Sessions; some by women we thought we knew very well, like Tamsen Donner and Virginia Reed whose letters are printed here in unedited (and powerful) form; and others by women whose writings have never been in print before, like Rachel Fisher. The selection seems to have depended upon the immediacy and richness of each item.

_Covered Wagon Women_ is to be valued in two distinct ways: First, it brings together in a single edition a major collection of the diaries of overland women. There will be a reading public in Holmes’ debt for this achievement alone. Second, this is probably the most perfectly documented edition a researcher will find. Although he minimizes the importance of scholarly apparatus (“There will be . . . some square brackets, but not squadoms of them marching line by line across the page. We will not place the omnipresent sic wherever a word is misspelled.”), Holmes’ footnotes nevertheless constitute a new charting of ground. He knows the subject and the region intimately. Who but such a scholar would know, for example, that ‘Nicker hias scocum Tillscum’ was Tabitha Brown’s transliteration of Chinook Jargon, or that the language was sufficiently common around Port­land for there to have been 18 editions of a _Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon_, last printed in 1960? Other notations, less esoteric, fill the pages of this valuable book. _Covered Wagon Women_ must become a handbook for those very scholars Holmes teases in his introduction. I rather think he will enjoy that.”

Here is a report by Alice Hall Petry on _THE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES_ by Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1983, $18.50). Wagenknecht’s chronological survey offers individual discussions of James’s novels, from _Watch and Ward_ to _The Sense of the Past_. Each discussion includes a plot summary, publication data and sources, plus an overview of the work’s technical flaws and strengths and its place in the James canon. Undergraduates would probably find these general discussions—plus the brief “Biography,” “Theory,” “Significance” and “Suggested Further Reading” sections—to be quite helpful. However, most advanced students of James would be interested only in the 55-page, heavily annotated “Notes” section.

Tim Miller says this of _KENT STATE/MAY 4_, edited by Scott L. Bills (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982, $16.50): “The shooting and killing of four Kent State University stu­dents by Ohio National Guardsmen in 1970 remains our most tragic memory of the late 60s/ early 70s heyday of campus antiwar activism. Editor Bills provides a good recap of the situa­tion at Kent State, the events of May 4, 1970, and the aftermath of it all. Essays by and interviews with some 23 others—many of them involved in the original events, the others providing analysis—provide a balanced over­view. Some of the most shocking events in our history (Jonestown comes quickly to mind) will never be explained adequately, but the task of trying to understand them remains necessary. That the Kent State University Press could publish a book like this—a work by a competent historian, not just a piece of official KSU flack­ery—is testimony that the university may finally be coming to grips with its long nightmare.”

Bud Hirsch says that _A BIOBIBLIOGRAPHY OF NATIVE AMERICAN WRITERS_, 1772-1924, by Daniel J. Littlefield, Jr. and James W. Parins (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1981, $19.50), is “excellent” and “won­derfully usable,” because it brings “to scholarly and public attention a vast body of work by a large number of relatively unrecognized Ameri­can Indian writers.”

You want to know what Ed Ruhe thinks of Wes D. Gehring, CHARLIE CHAPLIN: A Bio­bibliography (Green­wood Press, 1983, $35.00)? Here’s what Ed Ruhe thinks of it: This study appears to be the fifth in a series of “Popular Culture Bio-Bibli­ographies,” the earlier volumes having treated Knute Rockne, Hank Williams, John Henry and “Crockett.” Whatever the character of these earlier items, the present volume seems primarily addressed to undergraduates interested in Chaplin studies rather than advanced research scholars. It begins with an anecdotal biography partly brought to focus by a recurrent discussion of relevant comic theory; this brief essay is supplemented by an Appendix present­ing the actor’s life in condensed chronological form. An account of Chaplin’s reputation and influence; the texts of two undistinguished fea­tures articles from _Collier’s_, 1922 and 1925; a lengthy, appreciative account of a number of books and articles recommended to the curious reader; and a 6½-page, highly selective bibli­ography complete the text. As a reference work Gehring’s study acknowledges substantial debts to John McCabe’s _Charlie Chaplin_, 1978, and to Timothy Lyons’ “‘definitive’ Charles Chaplin: A Guide to References and Resources, 1979, the latter mentioned in a headnote to the Filmography, and elsewhere, but inadvertently omitted from the ‘Bibliographical Checklist of Key Chaplin Sources.’ “The biography, reputation study and Bibliographical Essay are written in the spirit of a lifetime Chaplin aficionado. A lengthy chrono­logical list of musical compositions by Chaplin, including 88 song titles and a number of sound­tracks and film scores, all unencumbered by publication or provenance data, is a curious and valuable feature of the book.

George Ehrlich, the Kansas City op, forwards the following intelligence concerning ARTI­FACTS AND THE AMERICAN PAST, by Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1981,
$13.95): This is basically a methodological handbook based on three axioms: material evidence should be confronted directly whenever possible; material culture data is important evidence; and there is need for methodological rigor in working with artifacts. The book consists of nine essays dealing equally with the themes of "Graphics as Artifacts," "Historic Sites as Artifacts" and "Landscapes as Artifacts." A tenth essay deals with fallacies and reflections, and with three appendices constitutes a "Coda." For those already persuaded, Professor Schlereth's book is useful as an aid in teaching or training. For those not accustomed to using artifacts as historical documents, the book is a practical introduction to a rapidly evolving practice, though probably more useful to the classroom teacher than anyone else.

Of related interest is this missive from Dickran Tashjian: EPITAPH AND ICON: A Field Guide to the Old Burying Grounds of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. By Diana Hume George and Malcolm A. Nelson. Orleans, Massachusetts: Parnassus Imprints. 1983. $12.95. This excellent field guide will be appreciated by gravestone buffs and scholars alike, not to mention the summer visitor to the Cape and neighboring islands. It is clearly written and adequately illustrated. There is no map to the area but the authors provide clear directions to the graveyards once you are in town. They also provide a concise overview of the subject and proceed with town-by-town surveys of graveyards and interesting markers. Although the authors apparently subscribe to the erroneous view of Puritan iconophobia and iconoclasm, they believe that notion throughout by concentrating on the artistry of epitaphs. A good contribution to gravestone scholarship in a neglected area of New England.

Here, from Jim Austin, is the word on THE MIRTH OF A NATION: America's Great Dialect Humor, edited by Walter Blair and Raven I. McDavid, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, cloth: $35.00; paper: $12.95). This is a sampler of works of the nineteenth-century crackerbox humorists and local color writers, "translated" for the modern reader who does not have the patience or the linguistic knowledge to worry out the cacography and eye-dialect of which those writers were often guilty. Nobody is better equipped to handle this, while retaining the flavor of the genuine dialect, than Blair and McDavid. But whether their efforts will gain a larger readership for these "unduly neglected" works seems questionable; most of the selections are already the best known works of the thirty-two authors represented, having been collected in Blair's classic Native American Humor (1937). Regardless of the good-humored popularizing approach, there is impeccable scholarship behind this edition. Blair's Introduction and headnotes, McDavid's Linguistic Note, a glossary and the very selective bibliography are models of conciseness.

american studies column

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For further information about I.S.C.S.C., contact Barkun at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York 18210.

EUROPEAN INFLUENCES on the visual arts of the Plains—such is the subject of the rally March 15-16 sponsored by the Center For Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You contact Jon Nelson, Love Library, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 68588-0475. Sponsors hope for proposals on such topics as "The influence of Géricault and Delacroix on the romantic view of the West; of German academic painting on the American view of the Rocky Mountains; of impressionism on Frederick Remington; or of cubism on the artists of the Southwest." And so on. They are game also for discussions of "western American influences on European art," which suggests perhaps there ought to be some ties between these folks and the I.S.C.S.C., with its convention on the image of America in other civilizations. Mr. Nelson, meet Mr. Barkun, if you're not already acquainted!
MARY DOUGLAS: if you're interested in what a workshop on the application of her work to our field came up with, write to Jay Mechling, American Studies, U. Cal.–Davis, 95616. Mechling writes us periodically to tell us about these unusual, informal and intensive sessions. The line on his flyer, "There will be some recreation and festivity in addition to the brain-work" is, I understand, no empty threat. Because of the rust in our publication process, we seem always to get news of such rallies too late to do readers who want to attend any good. You could do worse than to write to Mechling and ask him to stick your name on the mailing list.

You also might try to talk him out of abstracts of the session which the California ASA ran April 29–May 1, 1983 at Stanford. The subject was "American Lives: Theoretical Perspectives." There were some very sharp people on the program.

CONFERENCE ON LEISURE: we have information about a meeting on January 26–28, 1984 sponsored by the University of South Florida at St. Petersburg Beach. The way our printing schedules have been running, we think it unlikely that this issue will reach you in time for you to attend. But if the topic "Transitions to Leisure: Impact of Technology, Work, Play and Retirement" would have moved you to get in touch, you might contact B. G. Gunter at USF, Tampa, Florida 33620. Past experience suggests that conference coordinators are happy to provide programs and sometimes abstracts after the fact, and to help interested parties get in touch with appropriate participants.

WESTERN POETRY AND FICTION: such is the subject of an October 1983 regional P.C.A./A.C.A. roundup in Lubbock, Texas. Ancient history by now because of our durned printing schedule, but you can get information about what transpired at the Ranching Heritage Center from John Samson, English, Texas Tech University. The zip in Lubbock is 79409.

IFTPNDC stands for the Institute on the Federal Theatre Project and New Deal Culture. NEH is funding it, and its directors want to be in touch with people who are in any way connected with relevant New Deal projects or who are studying them. An oral history collection and directory are involved. Contact Roy Rosenzweig or Lorraine Brown, IFTPNDC, Fenwick Library, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia 22030; (703) 323-2546.

NEW RESOURCES IN AMERICAN STUDIES XIV: At one point, the Land Mortgage Company owned by J. B. Watkins (1845–1921) owned, among other enormous holdings, 1.5 million acres of southwest Louisiana. Watkins' papers have survived at least one narrow brush with destruction, and now, handsomely housed at the Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas, are available to scholars as the Jabez Bunting Watkins Collection. The collection is big and rich, certainly of use and interest to business historians as well as students of agriculture, westward migration, immigration, ecology, land use and regional history. Watkins' companies were active in a number of American and European cities, and developed land in Texas, Kansas and other states in addition to Louisiana. Further information from Tom Brown in the Kansas Collection at the Spencer. The zip in Lawrence is 66045.

1983 MASA MEETING: It was interesting and unusual, and made us look where some were not accustomed to look. The topic was "Communities and Community Studies." MASA met jointly with the North Central American Studies Association with sessions at a number of sites in and around Iowa City. Your Faithful Editor has been to Amana at least a dozen times, but never until this guided tour had anyone explained to him the relationship between architecture, community planning, theology and the social dynamics of this interesting series of settlements. The Coralville mentioned below is a commercial strip. Examination of the program documents that MASA and NCASA members were given good briefings before being taken out in the field.

A yeasty program of this sort results because of lively folks working hard. Albert Stone chaired the program committee; look who else was on it: Hamilton Cravens, Jack Filipiak, James Hippen, Richard Horwitz, Donald Irving, Alexander C. Kern, Joel Mickelson, John Raeburn and Elmer Suderman.

Here's the program:

COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

FRIDAY, April 15

TEACHING AND FUNDING COMMU-
NITY STUDIES, Thomas Hartig, Iowa Humanities Board, Moderator.
“Mississippi River Tours in 1900: Teaching Winona and Dubuque,” William L. Crozier, St. Mary’s College.
“Ethnic Communities and Higher Education: A Case Study for Student Research,” J. B. Christianson, Luther College.
“Funding Student and Community Work on Communities,” Eric Sandeen, University of Wyoming.

APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY STUDIES, Stow Persons, University of Iowa, Moderator.
Plenary Session: Sidney Robinson, Iowa State University, Architect; Robert Fogarty, Antioch College, Historian; Jules Zanger, Southern Illinois University, Literary Critic.

PREVIEWS OF SATURDAY.
“Introduction to a Commercial Strip,” Richard Horwitz, Karin Ohrn, University of Iowa.
“The Amanas and Community Studies,” Jonathan Andelson, Grinnell; Wayne Franklin, University of Iowa; James Hippy, Luther College; Philip Webster, Central College.
“Introduction to Middletown,” Dwight Hoover, Ball State University.

SATURDAY, April 16
SESSION A: INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES, Shelton Stromquist, University of Iowa, Moderator.
“Who Were the Communitarians? Membership in Three Utopian Experiments of the 1840s,” Carl J. Guarneri, St. Mary’s College of California.
“From Utopian Communities to Utopian Writings: Changes in Form, Content, and Purpose in XIX-century American Utopianism,” Howard P. Segal, Eastern Michigan University.

SESSION B: CLASSIC COMMUNITIES, Donald Dunlop, Iowa State University, Moderator.
“Middletown, Community Studies, and 1920s American Social Science,” Mark C. Smith, University of Texas–San Antonio.
“Psychoanalysis, Life History, and Community Studies: John Dollard’s Caste and Class in a Southern Town,” Steven Weiland, National Federation of State Humanities Councils.

SESSION C: COMMUNITIES AS BUILT ENVIRONMENTS, Herbert Gottfried, Iowa State University, Moderator.
“Roles of the Built Environment in Community: Navaho, Pueblo, Yaqui Examples,” David Saile, University of Kansas.
“Historic Preservation of Utopian Communities,” Howard P. Segal, Eastern Michigan University.

“Community in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” Elmer Suderman, Gustavus Adolphus College.
“The Drama of Survival: Television and Community,” Thomas Zynoda, Memphis State University.

SESSION B: IDEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY, Daniel Brantley, University of Iowa, Moderator.

SESSION C: DESTRUCTION AND DEFENSE OF COMMUNITY, James Harris, University of Iowa, Moderator.
“The People of Youngstown, Ohio, and the Mills: Corporate America and the Destruction of Community,” Michael Sheehan, University of Iowa.
“Worker Ownership as a Defense of Community: Rath Packing, Waterloo, Iowa,” Labor Center Staff, University of Iowa.


SESSION B: COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY STUDIES, Stow Persons, University of Iowa, Moderator.
“Who Were the Communitarians? Membership in Three Utopian Experiments of the 1840s,” Carl J. Guarneri, St. Mary’s College of California.
“From Utopian Communities to Utopian Writings: Changes in Form, Content, and Purpose in XIX-century American Utopianism,” Howard P. Segal, Eastern Michigan University.

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“Roles of the Built Environment in Community: Navaho, Pueblo, Yaqui Examples,” David Saile, University of Kansas.
“Historic Preservation of Utopian Communities,” David De Leon, Howard University.

“Urban Master Builders and Visions of the Democratic Community,” Mark Abbott, Purdue University.

THE MIDDLETOWN FILM PROJECT, Robert Fogarty, Antioch College, Moderator.
“The History and Background of the Project,” Dwight Hoover, Ball State University.
“Reflections from the Vantage Point of Hindsight,” Warren Vander Hill, Ball State University.

LUNCHEON IN CORALVILLE with Coralville Community Members.
AMANA FIELD TRIP: The Museum, walking, driving, small group discussions.

SUNDAY, April 17
9:00 A.M.
“Community in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” Elmer Suderman, Gustavus Adolphus College.
“The Drama of Survival: Television and Community,” Thomas Zynoda, Memphis State University.

SESSION B: IDEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY, Daniel Brantley, University of Iowa, Moderator.

SESSION C: DESTRUCTION AND DEFENSE OF COMMUNITY, James Harris, University of Iowa, Moderator.
“The People of Youngstown, Ohio, and the Mills: Corporate America and the Destruction of Community,” Michael Sheehan, University of Iowa.
“Worker Ownership as a Defense of Community: Rath Packing, Waterloo, Iowa,” Labor Center Staff, University of Iowa.

SESSION B: POWER AND LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY, Ruth Peterson, University of Iowa, Moderator.


"Not Alone to Build This Pile of Brick: The Role of Women in Richmond's Black Community, 1890-1930," Elsa Brown, University of Virginia.


SESSION C: DEFINITIONS AND CONFIGURATIONS OF COMMUNITY, Norman Hostetler, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Moderator.

"Female Networks and Community Activism," Ardis Cameron, Boston College.


"Mark Twain's Hannibal Today: Voluntary Associations and Community Identity," Donald Irving, Grinnell College.

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES has done considerably better than one might have expected under current governmental practices; we still get encouraging announcements of fellowships for various purposes, many of them designed to lend a hand to people floundering beneath exceptionally heavy teaching responsibilities. Information comes from the Division of Fellowships and Seminars, Room 316, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506.

LOCAL HISTORY grants-in-aid up to $3,000 apiece are available competitively to individuals or institutions. You get applications from James Gardner, American Association for State and Local History, 708 Berry Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37204.

ROCKEFELLER MONEY in portions of not more than $1,500 can be had by scholars 'of any discipline, usually graduate students or post-doctoral scholars' for research in the holdings of the Rockefeller Archive Center. You write to the Director, Pocantico Hills, North Tarrytown, New York 10591-1598.

THE SALOUTOS AWARD honors the late Theodore Saloutos and is for the best book on immigrant history. Details from Rudolph Vecoli, History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 55455.

SIERRA CLUB oral history series now numbers 58 interviews and constitutes a valuable research tool. One can eat it there or have it put up to take home, so to speak: it is available and also acquirable. Write 486 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 94720 or phone (415) 642-7395.

GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS for historical topics which connect with Indiana or the regions of which Indiana is a part are available from the Indiana Historical Society, 315 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis 46202. Recipients get $3,500 for doctoral dissertation expenses; the contact person is Gayle Thornbrough; the application deadline is March 15, 1984.

MINNESOTA CONFERENCE: American Studies folks at 225 Lind Hall, 207 Church Street, SE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455, write to tell us about a conference under their sponsorship April 20 and 21, 1984. The title is "New Directions: Rethinking Post-War America," by which they mean "the interaction of culture, politics and society from the 1930s through the 1950s." If you want to phone your questions, ask Lary May or Rosalind Moss at (612) 373-3667.

ARTS AND SOCIETY is the topic of a conference October 12 and 13, 1984, at Kent State. William Kenney, American Studies, KSU (Kent, Ohio 44242), writes to say that the deadline for 250-word proposals is February 15, 1984, and that there will be sessions on "literature, the media, illustration, performing arts, fashion design and feminist and ethnic perspectives on the arts." Given our problems with printing schedules, we fear that this announcement will reach readers after the deadline. On the other hand, our experience running conferences suggests that it's never too late to ask. Kenney's telephone number is (216) 672-7829.

LONG ON l'amabilité if short on cash, we are happy to respond to a polite request from D. Droixhe of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, who asks us, "Auriez-vous l'amabilité d'insérer dans votre périodique l'annonce suivante?" He is plugging a conference from 13-15 September, 1984, called "Images of the African from the Renaissance to the 20th Century," and goes on to explain that the studies to be presented pertain as much to Black American cultures as to literary images of Africa. You write M. Droixhe, rue d'Erquy 38, B-4480 Oupeye, Bruxelles.