

LOUIS ROSE: *San Diego's First Jewish Settler and Entrepreneur*. By Donald H. Harrison. (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2005. 304 pp. \$19.95.) Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Blutinger.

Traditionally, American Jewish history has focused on the major Jewish communities on the East Coast; the Jewish communities of Southern California have only recently begun to receive attention. Donald Harrison's book on Louis Rose, the first Jew to settle in San Diego, is part of this emerging trend.

Harrison, the former editor of the *San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage* and a columnist for the *San Diego Jewish Times*, is not a historian, and the book he has written is not intended for a scholarly audience. Instead, with its amusing anecdotes of San Diego's "Swiss-cheese jail," the corruption of its first common council, and the rivalry between Rose and Alonzo Horton over the routing of San Diego's long-delayed railroad, Harrison's book is designed to appeal to a lay readership interested in nineteenth-century San Diego history. *Louis Rose* is not merely a biography of this early San Diego figure; it is a portrait of a city struggling, mostly unsuccessfully, to realize its potential as a major port on the Pacific.

Like many Jews who came to America in the middle of the nineteenth century, Louis Rose was born and raised in one of the German states. Arriving in New Orleans in 1840, he tried and failed to earn a living. He moved first to Texas in 1848, in the hope of finding a way out of his debts, and continued on to California a year later. Along the way he befriended James Robinson, who was heading to San Diego. The two combined forces and reached the city in May 1850.

Shortly after their arrival in San Diego, Rose and Robinson attained economic and political prominence. Robinson became the city treasurer in 1851, and both he and Rose were elected to the city's board of trustees in 1852, where they worked to restore the city's finances after its first mayor's disastrous term had driven it into bankruptcy. Rose, who dabbled in ranching and mining, ultimately made his mark in real estate development, establishing the neighborhood of Roseville on San Diego Harbor, which he hoped would become a major economic center not merely for San Diego but for all of Southern California.

Rose, Horton, and the other San Diego business leaders pinned their hopes on the arrival of a southern transcontinental railroad. With its large, deep-water harbor, San Diego was well suited not only to dominate Southern California but to challenge the pre-eminence of San Francisco as the major U.S. port on the Pacific. Despite all these advantages, however, San Diego ultimately lost out to Los Angeles. Although Rose lived just long enough to see the arrival of the first passenger train to San Diego in 1885, the overwhelming majority of transcontinental traffic continued to flow to San Francisco, with Los Angeles receiving the rest, while San Diego remained an isolated backwater.

One of the flaws of Harrison's account is that, while he discusses in detail the efforts of Rose and other San Diegans to acquire rail service, he does not explain why they failed. In the end, it was precisely those qualities that made San Diego so attractive that doomed it. San Franciscans saw the threat posed by San Diego's harbor and so fought for years, first to delay the construction of a southern transcontinental railroad and then to have its terminus in Los Angeles, whose poorer harbor offered little competition.

This is part of a larger problem with Harrison's approach: his failure to provide historical context. For example, Harrison discusses various racist incidents in San Diego history but never lays out how Jews fit into the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-racial fabric of San Diego. There simply is no discussion of the tensions between the Californios, Mexicans, and the new Anglo settlers. Where did Jews fit within the racial hierarchy of the city? Harrison quotes sources that hint at a prominent role played by Jewish businesses in the city, but he never examines the historical reality behind these assertions. These are not minor questions; they go to the heart of his account of the growth of the San Diego Jewish community.

Research on the history of the Jews of Los Angeles shows that during the period from 1850 to 1880 Jewish businessmen played an important role in city politics. It was only with the massive wave of midwestern Protestant immigrants that Jews were excluded from Los Angeles' power structure. Rose's fate seems similar to that of Los Angeles' Jews, but without a more substantive exploration of these issues we cannot tell.

The most glaring drawback of the book, however, is Harrison's reliance on speculation to fill in the numerous gaps in the historical record. "Might have," "could have," "may have," "we can infer," are phrases that appear on almost every page. The worst example appears early in his account, where Harrison wonders if Rose had a bar mitzvah. Not content to merely guess that he did (based only on the fact that his Hebrew name indicated he was born on a holiday and that later in life he officiated at a few weddings), Harrison goes on to speculate as to which Torah portions Rose might have read if he had had one and then how he might have reflected on these texts, assuming he actually read them.

For these reasons, Harrison's book will have no more than a passing interest for scholars of nineteenth-century San Diego or Southern California Jewish history. It will be more at home in a gift shop than in a historian's library.

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CHARLIE SIRINGO'S WEST: *An Interpretive Biography*. By Howard J. Lamar. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. 370 pp. \$29.95.) Reviewed by David J. Miller.

Much of western historiography revolves around the debate of the West as process versus the West as region. Howard Lamar reminds us, by highlighting the connections between individuals and institutions in history, that the West also included people. Lamar places the very personal, engaging story of Charlie Siringo (1855–1928) within the broader currents of western history in the dynamic years between the Civil War and Hollywood's outpouring of westerns in the 1920s. Lamar examines several significant