Good Books about History, 2011
Reviews by members of the OLLI-GMU History Club
Compiled by Tom Hady

The Pacific, Hugh Ambrose (2010), reviewed by Don Ferrett

This book, written by the son of historian Stephen E. Ambrose, and dedicated to his father, is labeled "The Official Companion Book to the HBO Miniseries," *The Pacific*, that aired in March 2010. The approach Ambrose used was to focus on the lives of several men and follow them throughout their participation in World War II in the Pacific. He does this by discussing one man at a time for a short time span, then jumping to another, then another, etc. This can be somewhat disorienting until the reader becomes familiar with the players. Also, one of the key men in the miniseries gets very little space in the book, and two new characters (real men, but not shown in the series) are added. The coverage of the new men added new dimensions (a POW and an aviator) to the story told in the series. I was watching the series as I read the book, and found that I really did benefit from the combination of video and text. My main issues with the book were the number of times the endnotes referred to "unidentified clipping from undated newspaper" and the lack of a good index.

A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome, Alberto Angela (2009), reviewed by Tom Hady

How did the proletariat live in ancient Rome? What was a banquet at a Senator's domus like? What were Roman attitudes toward sex? What was it like to watch a fight between gladiators? The answers are all here, and the writing is clear and engaging as well.

Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War, Andrew J. Bacevich (2010), reviewed by George Heatley.

A retired Army Colonel and present professor of history and international affairs at Boston U, the author attempts to show that the dogmas and beliefs in America regarding foreign affairs have led us into looking for permanent peace through permanent military answers. The author takes his place in a growing number of analysts that are concerned about US reliance on force to maintain our position in the world.

The Vertigo Years: Europe, 1900-1914, Philipp Blom (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Year by year, Blom describes the social milieu of the early 20th century. He ranges from technological change to artistic change, from the arms race to eugenics. A recurring thought for this reviewer was "haven't I heard this recently?" Consider, for example, the following: *As the French priest Abbé Mugnier, the confessor of le tout Paris, grumbled in his diary in 1900: 'One is no longer at home with oneself today. It is only going to get worse. X-rays will penetrate you, Kodaks will photograph your passing, phonographs will engrave your voices. Aeroplanes threaten us from on high.'*

The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York, Deborah Blum (2010), reviewed by Tom Hady

While Sherlock Holmes may have had a laboratory at Baker Street, poisoning was a good way to murder someone at the opening of the 20th century. If you were careful how you did it, the coroner, whose training typically was that of an undertaker, was unlikely to detect the crime. That changed with the advent of modern science and its application to examining dead bodies. Blum's book is primarily the story of two pioneers of what we now call forensic science: Charles Norris, a pathologist and New York city's first trained medical examiner, and Alexander Gettler, the chemist who was its first toxicologist. Along the way, she retells many of the headline murders of the Jazz Age and Norris' campaign against prohibition, because of the way it was killing people who were drinking illegal liquor made from wood alcohol.

The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century, Alan Brinkley (2010), reviewed by Bob Bohall

As the founder of *Time, Fortune* and *Life* magazines, Luce changed the way we consume news and the ways we understand our world. A child of missionaries in China, educated at Yale, Henry Luce and Brit Hadden conceived the idea of *Time:* a "news-magazine" that would condense the week's events into a format accessible to increasingly busy members of the middle class. They launched in 1923 and young Luce quickly became a publishing titan. The first issues of *Life* were published in 1936. In spite of great success and political influence, happiness eluded him. The tome was an interesting history, not an easy 460 pages in terms of style, but worthwhile.

Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World, Timothy Brook (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Art history? Not quite. Brook uses a series of Vermeer's paintings as openings to tell the story of the widening globalization of Europe, and the Netherlands in particular, during the seventeenth century. The hat on the officer in "Officer and Laughing Girl," for example, becomes the foil not only for a discussion of 17th century manners ("The only person before whom a European gentleman bared his head was his monarch, but as Dutchmen prided themselves in bowing to no monarch and scorned those who did, their hats stayed on.") but for a history of the North American fur trade. Brook is a historian of China, and as one might expect, much of the remainder of the book discusses European trade with the Orient in this period.

The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement, David Brooks (2011), reviewed by George Heatley

The excellent journalist Brooks has come up with a book that really does not tell us anything new. However, in a somewhat over contrived look at different individuals at different times in their lives, the book reminds us that we are social animals that, blindly, follow social cues for our behavior. Easy reading.

Her Majesty's Spymaster, Stephen Budiansky (2005), reviewed by Tom Hady

The subtitle describes the book: "Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the Birth of Modern Espionage." Beginning with secret work for Cecil, then a stint as Ambassador to France, Walsingham rose quickly to become Elizabeth's Principal Secretary, a position of great power in the Court, and her intelligence service. Budiansky recounts enough of the political maneuvering of the Elizabethan Court to provide good context for Walsingham's activities, and tells of his spies and intelligence operations against the Spanish King and Mary, Queen of Scots. The book doesn't quite grab your attention like a good mystery novel, but it comes close!

The American Heritage Short History of the Civil War, Bruce Catton (1960), reviewed by Don Ferrett

When this book was written, Bruce Catton was probably the most influential Civil War historian around, and with good reason. Here he has produced an excellent overview of the war, including his perspectives on the relative competence of the generals and the importance of the major battles they fought. My only major concern with the book is the lack of maps, although Catton does describe the geographic flow in some detail. For those attracted to his easy writing style and interested in a more detailed study than is given in this *Short History*, I would recommend Catton's three volume set: *The Coming Fury, Terrible Swift Sword,* and *Never Call Retreat*. They even have maps!

Chasing the Sun: The Epic Story of the Star That Gives Us Life, Richard Cohen (2010), reviewed by Tom Hady

This is a history of man's interaction with and understanding of the sun. Cohen ranges from ancient monuments (such as Stonehenge) that appear to have been related to man's interaction with the sun to Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus and Galileo. He even covers the role of the sun in literature. Not all of this book will be of interest to most, but some likely will be of interest to all.

Braddock's March, Thomas E. Crocker (2009), reviewed by Tom Hady

"A British general at the command of some two thousand British soldiers and American militia–at the time the largest professional army ever assembled in North America–mounted one of the most ambitious and remarkable marches in history." Crocker tells that story in detail, and I think he tells it well and readably. I now understand that Braddock's campaign was a far more important event than I'd previously known. I also have always wondered where Washington learned to lead an army, and Crocker provides a significant answer: from General Braddock on this campaign. Crocker is an attorney in private practice in Washington, D.C.

Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq, John W. Dower (2010), reviewed by George Heatley

Dower, a Pulitzer Prize winning historian of Japan during and after WWII, was immediately aware of the American reaction to 9-11 as being similar to that of the reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor 60 years earlier. Dower looks at those, and other, history making events to see how the press, politicians, and other elite leaders can mobilize society in support of all out war.

The Age of Reason Begins, Will and Ariel Durant (1961), reviewed by Bob Persell

This Volume VII of the Durants' encyclopedic eleven volume story of civilization is a treasure trove of facts, philosophy, wisdom and great writing. I used this book in preparation for the class on the year 1610. It is certainly a dream come true for anyone interest in taking an interdisciplinary look at the human experience. An example, selected at random, describing Cardinal Richelieu: "What appears as his unfeeling cruelty was to him a necessity of rule: he took it for granted that men – certainly states – could not be managed by kindness; they had to be intimidated by severity. He loved France, but Frenchmen left him cold." You've got to love that kind of writing! At least I did.

Judging Dev: A Reassessment of the Life and Legacy of Eamon de Valera, Diarmaid Ferriter (2007), reviewed by Kevin Deasy

Eamon de Valera was a towering figure in modern Irish history. Born 1882 in New York to an Irish mother and Spanish father (who may not actually have been married – perhaps the reason his inclination toward the priesthood was not encouraged by the Catholic Church), he was raised by his grandmother under meager circumstances in Ireland. An avid student with a penchant for mathematics and the Irish language, he received a scholarship to Blackrock College and seemed destined for an academic career. Yet, when the Irish Volunteers were formed in 1913, de Valera – already married with children – joined immediately, regarding himself "as a soldier with battle inevitably in the offing."

During the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin, de Valera was a Battalion Commandant – and the only senior rebel leader who was not executed by British Crown authorities. Though some attributed his survival to American citizenship, de Valera (clearly sensitive on this subject) claimed his good fortune merely resulted from a chance delay in his court-martial and sentencing. By the time he was sentenced, public opinion was so inflamed by the execution of other Irish leaders that the British Government found additional executions to be inadvisable.

Whatever the reason for his survival, de Valera made the most of it, embarking thereafter on a controversial, decades-long political career as a Minister, Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and later President of Ireland (interspersed with periods of imprisonment and stints out of office in the political wilderness). Eamon de Valera's career encompassed everything from jailbreaks and gun battles to conferences with famous heads of state, right up to his death in 1975 at the age of 93.

Aloof, stern, unbending, devious, divisive, polarizing, and intensely religious – as he is often described – de Valera was undeniably the most significant politician of twentieth-century Ireland.

Ferriter's book is not a biography per se, but a close examination of de Valera's extraordinary career, informed by dozens of photos and color reproductions of documents (many of them hand-written) authored by de Valera himself. Though the opinions of de Valera's contemporaries and later commentators are mentioned, the abundance of primary source material presented allows readers to form their own assessments of this formidable rebel and statesman.

Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?, David Fromkin (2005), reviewed by Tom Hady

When I first started to look for this book, I had only the main title, *Europe's Last Summer*, and I expected a social history--life in Europe in the summer of 1914. That's not what the book is about. It is a political history of the events leading up to the commencement of hostilities, and an attempt to ferret out who was responsible. Fromkin blames the Germans and the Austrians. In particular he blames Gen. Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the German general staff who believed that war was inevitable and that Germany needed to start it sooner rather than later, and Count Leopold von Berchtold, Austrian-Hungary's foreign minister.

The Origins of Political Order from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution, Francis Fukuyama (2011), reviewed by George Heatley

The author famously wrote a book a decade ago on the end of history. I have not read all the book, but it seems interesting. I was turned off by the author's apparent belief that Chinese history was different because the Chinese never had a modern-style religion. (The author believes that religion created politics to enforce religious beliefs, or something like that.)

A Medieval Family: The Pastons of Fifteenth-Century England, Frances and Joseph Gies (1998), reviewed by Tom Hady

The Paston family were gentry in fifteenth century England, and a large volume of their correspondence has survived to the present day. The Gies's draw heavily on that correspondence to draw a picture of life in that period. By modern standards, the Pastons seemed to spend an inordinate amount of their time trying to maintain title to their real estate. The rule of law seemingly was much less developed, and the fact that an estate had been in the family for a couple of generations did not prevent a stronger, better-connected claimant (most often of the nobility) from taking it over, sometimes by force. Pressing a claim in the courts seemingly was ineffective. You had to line up support from well-connected nobility to make anything happen,

and on occasion even a letter from the King was ignored. Regularly when someone died, Pastons are noted to have hurried to estates they stood to inherit to notify the tenants that they would be the new owners, before a rival claimant could get there. Establishing occupation seemingly was so important that they would skip the funeral to visit the estates. I often had the feeling as I read this account that I was seeing the basis for such sayings as "Possession is nine-tenths of the law."

Hamilton's Blessing: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt, John Steele Gordon (Walker, 2010), reviewed by Tom Hady

Gordon writes well, and this is a very readable account of the national debt. Really, it is an economic history of the United States, since what happened to the debt is intimately connected to what happened to the economy. I recommend the account up through the beginning of the Great Depression highly. After that, the discussion gradually moves from history to an opinion piece, reflecting Gordon's decidedly business-oriented point of view.

A Perfect Red, Amy Butler Greenfield (2005), reviewed by Tom Hady

When the Spanish conquered Mexico, they discovered Indians using a much brighter and richer red dye than any then known in the "civilized" world, cochineal. Greenfield tells the story of this dyestuff derived from a small parasite of the prickly pear cactus. The Spanish were unusually successful in keeping a monopoly on it, helped by the fact that the cochineal insect is very finicky about its environment and very fragile. Even if a spy succeeded in slipping some prickly pears in his baggage, the cochineals would probably be dead before he reached the border. From discovery to obsolescence when chemists discovered aniline dyes, Greenfield tells an interesting, well-documented story.

A Journey Through Economic Time: A Firsthand View, John Kenneth Galbraith (1994), reviewed by Tom Hady

Of the academic economists who turned their talents and training to the immediate economic problems of the nation (my definition of a "political economist"), Ken Galbraith was one of the most active and, at times, influential. This book reviews our economic times from World War I through the early 1990's, from the viewpoint of one who occupied the liberal end of the political spectrum and played a significant part in programs from the New Deal to wartime price control to postwar reconstruction to the War on Poverty. For a reviewer who learned of the early part of that time from professors who had lived it first-hand, and who experienced the latter part "up close and personal" as a government economist dealing with some of the same issues, it makes very interesting reading.

To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World, Arthur Herman (2004), reviewed by Beth Lambert

It may seem strange to describe as a "page turner" the factual account of the British navy from its beginnings under the indomitable John Hawkins to its last great battle for the Falkland Islands in the twentieth century. But that is exactly what the reader can expect from this well-written, well-researched book. Details of the sort that experts will appreciate are interwoven with narratives of famous and less-familiar battles and the men who often secured victory from near defeat. My particular fascination with the whole comes from the way Herman uses narrative techniques to set a scene or describe an individual, as well as to conclude each chapter in a way that makes the reader eager to push forward. One example will suffice: ending an early chapter describing the French defeat of the British at Calais in 1558, he writes: "The door to the medieval vision of continental dominion had slammed shut. Which doorway now led to the future was still not obvious. But when it did open, it would swing decisively to the west." In effect, this is the sort of good writing in which sound history goes hand in hand with pleasurable reading.

How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It, Arthur Herman (2001), reviewed by Don Ferrett

I was somewhat misled by the title of this book, thinking that it was going to cover the scientific inventions made by Scots beginning in the eighteenth century. Though one of the fourteen chapters does cover this topic, the book is mostly about philosophical, political, and economic advances brought about by the Scots. These advances are put in historical context, primarily regarding the relationship between Scotland and England; the greatest advances having come about after the Union of Scotland and England in 1707. The book contains much detail about familiar names, such as Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, and Adam Smith, and events such as the establishment of the Scots-Irish, the highland clearances, and the general diaspora of Scots to America and throughout the world. I did not find the author's argument for a world invented by the Scotts compelling, but it was still a good read.

The Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, (1896), reviewed by George Heatley.

Probably most of us with an interest in the Middle East have read Herzl. It is worthwhile to read it again for its insights based on historical interpretation, and light it casts on current events. (As too often is the case, we make judgments regarding history based on what others tell us to believe, not on the basic ideology. For example, many people are anti-communist who never

devoted twenty minutes to read the communist manifesto or any other socialist historical analysis.)

Willie Mays: The Life and the Legend, James S. Hirsch, authorized by Willie Mays, (2010), reviewed by Bob Bohall

The flyleaf states he was considered to be "as monumental—and enigmatic—a legend as American sport has ever seen" (*Sports Illustrated)* and that he is arguably the greatest player in baseball history, still revered for the passion he brought to the game. With meticulous research, and drawing on interviews with Mays himself and well as with close friends, family and teammates, Hirsch presents a complex portrait of one of America's most significant cultural icons. The book is interesting but slow and dull. The 550 pages is fine but overly draws on the press clippings. Willie was not a boat rocker, he just wanted to play ball. He did that with energy and joy but not as an icon of the civil rights movement involved in national politics. His life was ordinary apart from his special talent for baseball. Reviewer's note: As a kid I was a solid fan of the Giants and disappointed when the team moved to San Francisco. A shorter book with better writing would be an improvement.

Bloodmoney, David Ignatius (2011), reviewed by Jo Browning Seeley

Double-dealing between Pakistan and the US; between elements in Pakistan's ISI; between US government agencies; between operatives in the Intelligence Community--the gripping action of this novel sounds like much of what we've been reading in the press in recent weeks. The characters and plot are absorbing, with many unexpected twists. David Ignatius, who writes on foreign affairs in the Washington Post, has also written a number of well-researched spy novels. He spent time in Waziristan for this latest work and appears to have some very good sources.

The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson (2008), reviewed by Bob Persell

This isn't a "true" autobiography, but it is a collection of Jefferson's thoughts that he wrote in 1821 (at age 77) and it is fascinating. Some gems: his description of Patrick Henry as "the laziest man in reading I ever knew;" his assertion that the clause condemning slavery was removed from the Declaration of Independence in deference to South Carolina and Georgia; and the fact that Jefferson, because he had no military competence, resigned after his second year as governor so that civil and military power could be united in General Nelson.

Jefferson lived in Paris at the start of the French Revolution and his description of the storming of the Bastille and his accounts of mob violence are quite vivid. Also, his thoughts on what to do with the King and Queen were surprising and in a way refreshing. He favored keeping the king

under a new constitution. He blamed France's troubles on the Queen; he would have locked her up in a convent and kept the king in position.

The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830, Paul Johnson (1991), reviewed by Tom Hady

Be warned! This book has an even 1000 pages of text. It concentrates heavily on British society and covers it exhaustively (and exhaustingly.) But it is rewarding. Where else would one find gems such as the quotation from Michael Faraday, "The man who is certain he is right is almost sure to be wrong; and he has the additional misfortune of inevitably remaining so." Or the fact that soccer, rugby and American football all trace their roots to ancient games played between villages, which often degenerated into mass fights. Or the fact that young John Stuart Mill, later to be studied in every history of economic thought, was educated by his father who, at age 13, "took me through a complete course of political economy." And you thought Econ 101 was hard when you were college age! In one of his last chapters, "Crash," Johnson describes, first, the American bubble and the panic of 1819 and then, the British bubble and crash of 1825. Both have eerie similarities to U. S. events nearly two centuries later.

Berlin 1961, Frederick Kempe (2011), reviewed by Jo Browning Seeley

Fifty years ago, ongoing Cold War tensions reached a crisis point in Berlin, with potentially devastating consequences. Frederick Kempe presents a riveting, richly detailed study of the events leading up to the construction of the Berlin wall in August 1961 and the subsequent face-off between US and Soviet tanks in October. Kempe did extensive research on these events in American, German, and Soviet archives and interviewed numerous participants; the result is a real page-turner. It is enlivened by numerous personal--and sometimes dramatic--anecdotes, including the back channel relationship set up between the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, and KGB agent Georgi Bolshakov.

Kempe's assessment of President John F. Kennedy's handling of this crisis is largely critical. He begins with a persuasive--although not conclusive--argument that Kennedy missed out on a chance to achieve a breakthrough in US-Soviet relations early in his administration by misreading potentially conciliatory signals from Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who then mauled him at the Vienna summit in June. Kempe complains that throughout the months leading up to the crisis Kennedy consistently gave the message that Khrushchev could do whatever he wished on the territory he controlled as long as he didn't touch West Berlin or Allied access to that city. However, it can be argued that this had become the de facto US position throughout the Cold War. Kempe comes down hardest on Kennedy's failure to take action when the wall went up. Under the four-power agreements, which ensured unrestricted movement through Berlin, Kennedy had every right to order his military to knock down the barriers put up on August 13. The President's response was, "a wall is better than a war." Kempe concludes that the most

significant aftershocks of what he calls Kennedy's mishandling of the events in Berlin in 1961 were the freezing in place of the Cold War division of Europe for three more decades and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. He argues that Khrushchev would not have put nuclear weapons in Cuba if he had not concluded that Kennedy was weak and indecisive. Others argue that Kennedy's strategy eliminated the risk that a nuclear war would erupt over Berlin. Speculation continues, but there is no doubt that this is an engrossing, highly readable account.

Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling, Ross King (2003), reviewed by Don Ferrett

King has done a significant amount of research on art and politics in early sixteenth century Italy. He has included the what, why, and how many of the great works of this period came to be created, and sometimes destroyed. While the major theme of the book is Michelangelo's painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the author has included a great deal about the artist's personal and family life. King gives special attention to Michelangelo's rivalry with Raphael during this period (they were working in nearly adjacent rooms at the Vatican), and includes his earlier competitions with da Vinci and other notable artists. Initially commissioned to sculpt a tomb for Pope Julius II, Michelangelo was forced to switch to the chapel ceiling project, a fresco, an art form for which he had displayed no previous talent. His result, after four years of grueling work, has amazed the world for half a millennium.

The Wild Vine, Todd Kliman (2010), reviewed by Tom Hady

This is a history of "the *real* American grape," the Norton. Norton's Virginia Seedling was developed by Dr. Daniel Norton on his farm near Richmond in the 1820's as a wine grape well adapted to Virginia conditions. It disappeared from Virginia during prohibition, when wine grapes were systematically torn up by the government. Fortunately, it had also found a following in Missouri, and a few vines survived there, maintained by bootleggers. With the skill of a journalist (which he is, writing for The Washingtonian), Kliman weaves the story of the grape and its eventual reintroduction at two Virginia wineries, Horton and Chrysalis.

In the Garden of Beasts, Erik Larson (2011), reviewed by Michael J. Kastle

Some of you may have read "The Devil in the White City" by the same author and are thus familiar with his style. This book takes place in Berlin in the mid 1930's. The principal characters are the newly appointed US Ambassador and his family. The author has used much archival material from the Dodd's family, US State Department, and many foreign sources, to describe the atmosphere that existed in Berlin during this time. The author has taken factual information and presented it in a very readable and informative manner. This is a work of non-fiction. The book gives some very good insights into the everyday relationships between the

diplomatic community in Berlin and the German Nazi administration, with some interesting insights into the workings of the US State Department, not found in most histories of the period.

The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness in the Fair That Changed America, Erik Larson, (2003), reviewed by Bob Bohall

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was perhaps the greatest fair in American history. This is the story of the men and women whose lives it irrevocably changed and of two men in particular. Architect Daniel Burnham built it; serial killer Dr. H. H. Holmes used it to lure victims to his World's Fair Hotel, designed for murder. Both men left behind a powerful legacy, one of brilliance and energy, the other of sorrow and darkness. I enjoyed the slice of history of the times and especially the planning, construction, and development of the fair. The author brings in sad, charming and funny stories of a supporting cast of historical characters including Buffalo Bill, Scott Joplin, Theodore Dreiser and George Ferris (whose mammoth wheel become America's answer to the Eiffel tower). It is excellent history, well written, enjoyable and dramatic. The serial killer part is not my favorite component but it is low keyed and serves to illustrate that crime was not a stranger to the past.

The Fourth Part of the World: the Race to the Ends of the Earth, and the Epic Story of the Map That Gave America its Name, Toby Lester (2009), reviewed by Tom Hady

This is a history of maps and exploration leading up to the discovery of the "fourth Part of the world," the part where we live. For me, the most interesting part was to begin to understand that a "map of the world" had a different function for a medieval man who was not likely to use it for travel. Seamen used sea charts, from which our modern maps seem to have evolved. Monks were not allowed to go on Crusades (they might discover worldly pleasures), so they read descriptions of travel so they could go vicariously. Amerigo Vespucci is treated more fully than I have seen elsewhere.

In the Valley of the Kings: Howard Carter and the Mystery of King Tutankhamun's Tomb, Harold Meyerson (2009), reviewed by Paul Howard

In 1891, as a 17 year old hired to sketch the finds of an archeologist, Carter began the course of an adventure in finding cultural treasures and artifacts dating back several thousand years. An odd duck in a professional atmosphere of eccentrics, and "not quite a gentleman," he ultimately discovered a fabulous trove of what others had missed. Interesting, brief, and you'll learn about the intense competition for "finds." But I must have slept through the "mystery" – I think the word was a cover gimmick to attract readers to this small volume.

The Way of Herodotus: Travels with the Man Who Invented History, Justin Marozzi (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Marozzi travels to places Herodotus went and writes about his trip. The result is uneven. We learn about the history of some localities that one would have be a specialist to hear about otherwise. Did you know, for example, that on the island of Samos there is a tunnel through Mt. Kastro, excavated from both ends that met successfully in the middle, before the Greeks are known to have had surveying instruments or compasses, and two centuries before Euclid's *Elements*? Descriptions like that kept me interested enough to slog through long paragraphs of what I mentally labeled "WWHHT"–What Would Herodotus Have Thought?"

Globish: How The English Language Become the World's Language, Robert McCrum (2010), reviewed by George Heatley.

The title says it all. Easy reading.

The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris, David McCullough (2011), reviewed by George Heatley

A discussion of the Americans who went to Paris in the 1800's and what they brought back to America. It is an easy, interesting read that demonstrates how "provincial" Americans felt in the 19th century. Part of the problem, apparently, was that there were no good art schools or medical colleges in the US at the time so that artists or those interested in medicine and the human anatomy went to Paris simply to get an advanced education. Also it is well to realize that many Americans went to Paris to live because it was cheaper to live in Paris than in Boston or New York. It was surprising to me to realize that the artists were working artists that supported themselves most often as portrait painters. Of course, this was before photography so most well to do families commissioned portraits to remember family members. Samuel Morse of telegraph fame earned his living as a portrait painter for most of his life, and got the idea of the telegraph from early experiments with electricity in Paris when electricity was barely known in America. The Pulitzer prize winning author relies on research into the letters home and other memoirs for his excellent descriptions of the lives and reactions to Paris of the American ex-patriots of the time.

Why Leaders Lie: The Truth about Lying in International Politics, John J. Mearshimer (2011), reviewed by George Heatley.

This short 140 page book was a disappointment. I don't know what I expected but the book is a familiar recounting, with historical examples, of how leaders attempt to influence the public, and other leaders, with lies or half-truths.

The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, 1492-1616, Samuel Eliot Morison (1974), reviewed by Don Ferrett.

At the time it was written, this was the "definitive overview" of the early voyages of discovery by Europeans to the southern hemisphere. It is the companion to Morison's volume on the northern voyages, which was published in 1971. Primary emphasis is given to the efforts of Columbus, Magellan, and Drake, clearly heroes of Morison's, but there are many other adventures chronicled here as well. The author gives the names of all ships in each sailing, the principle members of the expedition, and the financial and political supporters. He personally sailed along many of the routes so that he could give more accurate descriptions of their experiences at ground (sea) level. Included in the book are many photographs of the locations pertinent to each voyage.

I found the book easy to read and memorable. Morison's style is not that of the dry academic. He includes much colorful detail that makes for entertaining reading and the characters more real. It is quite clear who he likes (see above) and dislikes (Amerigo Vespucci, among others), but his reasons are openly stated. Some readers will have difficulty with Morison's Euro-biased stance. The era of political correctness with regard to native peoples had not taken hold when this book was written. On the whole, I would recommend both volumes to all students of the early European contact with the Americas.

At All Costs: How a Crippled Ship and Two American Merchant Mariners Turned the Tide of World War II, Sam Moses (2006), reviewed by Bob Persell

As a naval officer, I'm fairly well acquainted with the exciting exploits of the warships of the various navies in WWII but I've been totally deficient in reading about the contributions of the merchant marine; I've rather stupidly thought that reading about this would be rather boring. Boy, was I wrong.

Sam Moses, the author, served in the US Navy on a heavy cruiser off the coast of Vietnam. He subsequently has become a sports journalist, but in this book he has written a corker of a book about a convoy trying to deliver supplies of fuel and other supplies to the island fortress of Malta. Malta was a key to defeating Rommel in North Africa. The island governor calculated that without supplies the island would be forced to surrender within 16 days.

Churchill ordered Operation Pedestal which involved 14 merchant ships, 33 destroyers, 7 cruisers, 4 aircraft carriers, and two battleships. In addition, numerous aircraft and several submarines were involved. The merchant ship was a supertanker, SS Ohio, on loan from the

United States, which was carrying the key load of fuel which would enable the British fighters on Malta to continue to use Malta's airfields and also permit the return of British submarines to their base in Malta. From this position they would be able to interdict supplies headed for the Axis forces in Africa.

Moses describes in vivid detail the horrors that the convoy suffered and the heroism of those involved in fighting their way through submarines and dive bombers. Only five merchant ships got through. One of these, the Ohio, was the critical one. Although heavily damaged and having been abandoned at various times, she was towed with decks awash into Valletta Harbor.

This is an exciting story about an often overlooked aspect of WWII and it's good reading too.

The Normans: The Conquests that Changed the Face of Europe, Francois Neveux (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

The Normans began in Scandinavia, ruled Normandy and eventually England. Another branch conquered southern Italy and Sicily. This is the history of the Viking raiding period, their settlement in France and the rise of William the Bastard (Neveux does not use the appellation "the Conqueror") as well as the Hauteville brothers in Italy and Sicily. Neveux is Professor of History at Caen University and is (according to the book) "…the leading medieval historian in France." The book is well worth reading if the subject interests you.

Quarrel With the King: The Story of an English Family on the High Road to Civil War, Adam Nicolson (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Nicholson tells the story of the Pembrokes, major players in English government in 16th and 17th centuries. The story of their rise and their activities is interesting. More interesting, though, is the long chapter on the land tenure system and the operation of farms and villages in that time.

Mrs. Adams in Winter: A Journey in the Last Days of Napoleon, Michael O'Brien (2010), reviewed by Tom Hady

In early 1815, Louisa Adams set out from St. Petersburg in a berline (a heavy carriage) with her son, Charles Francis, to meet John Quincy Adams in Paris. The story of that trip should be fascinating reading. Unfortunately, Mrs. Adams apparently did not leave many details of the trip, and O'Brien's book was, to this reader, disappointing. The book is more correctly described as a biography of Louisa, interspersed with snatches of information about the towns she visited and the people she saw.

Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War, Richard E. Rubenstein, (2010), reviewed by Bob Bohall

The book was a fascinating 175 pages reflecting on the contrast of 1776 to the end of World War II with the US spending 19 years at war compared to 23 years of war and counting since 1950. Rubenstein explores both the rhetoric that sells war to the public and the underlying social and cultural factors that make the sales pitch so effective leading to the Korea War, the Viet-Nam War, the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War and the Afghan War. Religion, monotheism and hell and damnation; democracy and over reaction; terror and public safety; over reliance on efficacy of force; and the power of the military industrial complex are discussed. Why do we over react, why are we so insecure, why do we consider ourselves the policemen of the world and why can we not adjust to changes in expectations and US power in the world economy? Rubenstein is University Professor of Conflict Resolution and Public Affairs at GMU, and an OLLI lecturer.

Cleopatra, Stacy Schiff (2010), reviewed by Gerald P. Holmes

I knew from a previous biography that Schiff writes well and I was not disappointed. She obviously has also done some thorough research. Her subject comes across as an extremely able and highly intelligent woman. Cleopatra may have suffered from the fact that her previous biographers were male, and the male of the human species has trouble facing the fact that there are females whose intelligence exceeds theirs.

The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression, Amity Shlaes (2007), reviewed by Tom Hady

Shlaes gives us an interesting account of the Great Depression. She concentrates on the programs and people of the period, rather than the macroeconomics. She spends a great deal of time on the utilities industry, which she seems to believe Roosevelt wanted to nationalize. In general, FDR does not come as a hero. In the early part of the book, I concluded that her "forgotten man" was the one affected by what we now call the "law of unintended consequences," but as I read on I decided I didn't really know who he was. Entrepreneurs, perhaps? She seems to feel they were not well treated during this period. I found many parallels with current economic policy arguments.

The Enemy at the Gate: Habsburgs, Ottomans and the Battle for Europe, Andrew Wheatcroft (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Grab a cup of coffee and read about the wars between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. I wish I had found this book before I travelled to Eastern Europe last autumn; I would have understood the context of the numerous fortifications I saw much better.
That cup of coffee? The myth is that coffee was introduced to Europe when the Viennese found a bag of coffee beans in the abandoned Ottoman camp after the siege. Wheatcroft says it may be true, but the important point is that Vienna was a trading center for eastern goods, and there were

a number of people there who spoke the language and moved freely between East and West. It was a logical place for coffee to become established in the West, whether or not they found the beans.

For Love & Liberty, Robin Young (2006), reviewed by Don Ferrett.

Robin Young's inspiration for this book was a letter written by a 34-year-old Civil War volunteer from Rhode Island to his wife. The letter was written on July 14, 1861, as his unit was camped in Washington, D. C., waiting for orders to do battle with the Rebels near Manassas Junction. This moving letter describes his love of country and family as his reasons for volunteering, knowing that he may never see his family again. (The letter was read at the end of the first segment of Ken Burns' documentary *The Civil War.*)

Young has done a great deal of research for this large work. She includes the life stories of the hero and his wife to show the development of the New England character that compelled so many to enlist in the war effort. She has also collected and included considerable information on the daily life, troop movements, and actions of the men, on both sides, involved in the first major battle of the war. The many photographs help to convey the feeling of the era, and the maps are mostly useful (although I would have preferred more detailed maps of the battleground). The fact that the battle took place locally, and many of the places named are familiar, helped to make the book an interesting read. The book is all the more meaningful since we are about to celebrate the 150th anniversary of First Manassas.

Tirpitz: The Life and Death of Germany's Last Superbattleship, Niklas Zetterling and Michael Tamelander, (Kindle edition, 2009), reviewed by Bob Persell

Grand Admiral Erich Raeder pushed hard for a strong German surface Navy. It was a strategic error as it diverted resources that might have been better used by Germany. Also, Germany did not have the petroleum resources to support a large navy. After the sinking of the Bismark early in the war, Tirpitz remained the last of Germany's super battleships. She was moved to northern Norway to prey on the Murmansk convoys, where she was largely ineffectual because of British naval efforts and because of Hitler's reluctance to risk the Tirpitz. Nevertheless, she tied up significant British resources. Tirpitz was sheltered in Norwegian fjords, protected by torpedo nets, antiaircraft batteries on surrounding mountain sides, nearby fighter bases, artificial fog machines and the frequent cloud cover typical of the area. The British attempts to eliminate the Tirpitz led to numerous attacks. Tirpitz was attacked by heavy bombers, torpedo bombers, human torpedoes, midget submarines, carrier aircraft and finally with heavy bombers armed with massive bombs. These finally did the trick as Tirpitz was sunk in November 1944. All this is chronicled nicely by the authors.

While Tirpitz did little actual damage to the allied convoys, she did have value as a "fleet-in-being." Ironically, this was the same role that Germany's Navy played in WWI after the battle

of Jutland. Instead of pursuing a strong surface navy, Hitler would have been far better served by using his resources to build up his submarine fleet.