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President's Message

As I write this on the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's and Charles Darwin's birthdays, I reflect that history—the history of which we are most aware and to which we most often return—is often connected with change. Major change is connected with change agents, and it is difficult to imagine more significant change agents, in their respective areas, than Lincoln and Darwin. On the other hand, that which is immutable has no history. History begins not with the Garden of Eden, but with the expulsion of Adam and Eve therefrom. As we seek to enhance historical understanding of our community, and to preserve what is of historic value, let us value history as a record, not as a relic. Heraclitus had it right—we never step into the same river twice.

John Leonard
Tamalpais Valley was once open terrain swept by marine winds and coastal fog. Called Coyote Hollow on 19th century maps, it was granted as part of Rancho Saucelito to William Richardson in 1838. Like most of the ranchos then, it was an undeveloped landscape populated with waterfowl and herds of deer and elk. Native Americans, known to have been present because of the archaeological sites scattered around the valley and along the bay shore, had left the area with the establishment of the Spanish mission and presidio in San Francisco. When Richardson was ruined in the frenzy of development and investment speculation of the 1850s, attorney Samuel Reading Throckmorton took title to the remaining lands of the Rancho. Throckmorton kept the bulk of the former rancho restricted as a hunting preserve. Following his death in 1883, the 3,800 acre-ranch was acquired by the San Francisco Savings Union. Bank officers incorporated the Tamalpais Land and Water Company in 1889 and proceeded to develop the town site of East­land, later renamed Mill Valley. The bulk of the Sausalito Rancho the Tamalpais Land and Water Company reserved for agricultural development. An 1892 survey of lands to the south and west of East­land created 32 subdivisions known as “ranches” designated by the letters “A” to “Z” and the numbers “1” to “8.”

This included John Dias, who purchased some 250 acres from the Tamalpais Land and Water Company in 1898. His family built a ranch house and cow barns on the ridge west of Tamalpais Valley. His extensive grazing land extended north along the ridge and was visible from Homestead. He then purchased about 20 acres in Homestead Valley, where he built Hill Ranch, the headquarters for his extensive owned and leased holdings. His 1917 obit­uary notes: “John Dias, an early settler on the West Coast, was a pioneer ranchman whose influence on the early history of the area is still felt by the people of Mill Valley.”

**DAIRY ERA**

By this time there were approximately 12 existing tenant ranches on the these lands, which were then offered for sale in 1898. Dairymen of Portuguese Azorean birth who had been evidently working the land for decades acquired most of the ranches.
uary in the Mill Valley Record described him as a wealthy rancher, a member of the board of directors of the Bank of Mill Valley and a prominent leader in the Portuguese colony of the region. Similarly the Pimentel-Silva family first established their ranch at the eastern end of Tennessee Valley (then called Elk Valley) near its junction with Tamalpais Valley around 1870. They operated a dairy ranch for approximately 60 years on their property, where family members still reside. The adjacent dairy land at the eastern end of Tennessee Valley (where Tam Valley Elementary School is now located) was acquired by the Borges family.

The heart of Coyote Hollow was a relatively sheltered L-shaped watershed that fed into Coyote Creek, which flowed eastward into Richardson Bay. There was easy access to market by the wharves on the bay, by the Sausalito-Bolinas road and later by various rail stops for the North Pacific Coast Railroad. Like other tenant ranches on Throckmorton land however, few records survive to provide much information on a tenant ranch that evidently operated there from the 1870s.

The ranch was identified as “Hoppys” on the 1873 Marin County Map and the 1870 census enumerated Henry Hoppe, his family, and partner Frank Shuman. Hoppe and Shuman possessed 45 milk cows, according to the federal agricultural census of the same year. In 1898 the majority of the valley, 926.36 acres bound by the Dias property to the west and the Pimentel property to the south, was marketed as Ranch E.

SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT
Unlike the surrounding properties, Ranch E would not continue as a dairy ranch. Situated adjacent to the interurban rail stops on the Northwestern Pacific railroad line along the Richardson Bay shoreline, it had potential as residential property like other areas along the line such as nearby Almonte and San Anselmo. S.A. Moss purchased it in 1906. A prospectus published around 1908 renamed the area as Tamalpais Valley, “whose rich, green verdant lands and peaceful slopes, whose very nooks invite you.” Its author advertised parcels on the valley floor between Main (now Laurel) and Maple Streets. The offerings included one-acre lots, not just 25- or 50-foot lots that were “hardly enough room to turn around in.” Lots along Shoreline Highway were of smaller proportion as this area was reserved for use as a town site. Meanwhile, German immigrant Wilhelm Neuhaus was hired as caretaker of the property. He had moved his family into a residence presumed to be part of the former Big Coyote Ranch. This house survives to the present on Pineo Street. His daughter Evelyn, 12 years old at the time, recalled years later: “The hillsides to the west were completely bare then. There was a small grove of Eucalyptus trees . . . on Northern Avenue near Browning . . . our water was piped from a reservoir at the end of Tamalpais Way (now Green Glen) which was fed by a spring.”

When the subdivision venture did not sell quickly, the major property holders attempted to start a timber operation in 1910. Wilhelm Neuhaus supervised five men who planted 175,000 eucalyptus trees at the back of the valley. Unfortunately, the wood proved unsuitable as lumber, though the trees survive to this day. The initial development was remarked as Little City Farms in 1919 and then enlarged with an addition at the back of the valley around Glen...
wood. Garden Valley Park subdivided land around Fairview in 1919 and Tamalpais Woods opened land for sale around Marin Drive in 1927.

The valley began to change at a fast rate. More families arrived and a community began to develop. Samuel and Lucy Kenny, who built their house at 412 Ash Street around 1909, were instrumental in establishing the non-denominational Community Church at the corner of Ash Street and Marin Avenue (now a private residence). There was a Bible school at the church in the summer. Children would line up on Ash Street and sing "Onward Christian Soldiers." There was a quilting table that the women would lower by pulleys from the ceiling. Neuhaus and others formed the Tamalpais Valley Improvement Club in 1922, which campaigned for bridges over Coyote Creek, bus shelters for school children and a fire station, which was built as an adjunct to the group's clubhouse on Maple Street. In the pre-television era, they hosted dances, costume parties and bingo games.

BUSINESSES

Despite the original expectation, the primary business district for the Valley developed along Shoreline Highway. It was the only route north until Richardson Bay Bridge was built in 1931 and obviously experienced more traffic. The Tamalpais Service Station was one of the first businesses established at the junction of Shoreline and the road to Mill Valley, a location rumored to be the site of an old stage stop and known by the 1920s as Dolan's Corners for the landowner there. According to a descendant, Christopher Welch operated the station in the early 1920s, as well as worked in the East Bay, sometimes commuting across the bay by a boat that he kept behind the station. The family residence behind the gas station was built on piles and one could fish off the porch. It should be noted that before several generations of land filling efforts, the tidelands came nearly up to the junction and the future Kay Park neighborhoods were seasonal marsh.

Tony Oliveira and Daniel Alvernaz eventually acquired the small wooden clapboard gas station. Most of the ranchers in the area Alvernaz (and presumably
remembered working at the station at night when he was about ten. He would sit at the gas station counter doing his homework and listen to the Pacific Coast League Seals baseball games on the radio. In 1936 Alvernaz tore down the old station and built the familiar stucco building with the tile roof. The business was eventually renamed Dan's Liquors, now operating under a subsequent owner a few doors away.

By the 1950s, Shoreline was lined with services such as Meyers Cleaners (now the rug shop), the Finger Garage, Hagen Moving and Storage, Martin Brothers Supplies, and the T and M Hatchery along the east side of the highway. McWilliams Painting and Decorating, the Ceramic Studio, Tamalpais Lumber Company and Will Thiele's Richfield station on the west side of the highway. There were also several bars, including the Paradise and the Pastime, the latter reportedly having earned its notoriety during the years that Marinship workers frequented the establishment during the World War II.

Tamalpais Valley's working class and rural roots were eventually, however, to be subsumed by the great suburban expan-
In the Spring of 1949, when I was six years old, my parents located to a house on Shoreline Highway. Across the highway was a beautiful grassy hill covered with oaks and flowers, and through the back yard ran Coyote Creek, a small trickle of water lined with trees and teeming with life. In those days Tam Valley was a sleepy little community, occupied mostly by long-time residents. I remember that one of our neighbors had an old photograph of the valley taken around the turn of the century. You could count the houses on one hand, but the hills were bare of trees. Even then I could see that the ravages of man had begun early, for all the trees had been stripped from the hillsides to heat the booming gold rush town of San Francisco. I thought how lucky I was to be living in the valley during a more gentle time when the trees were growing back again. Yes, it is true that there were many more houses than there had been half a century before, and a new tract called Kay Park had just been built toward the lower end of the valley, but these seemed like innocent changes because I was small and the hills were immense, wild, and endless.

As I grew older, I came to know every nook and cranny of Tam Valley. I loved the big marsh below Kay Park; I used to follow the creek there, then cut across into the great marshland at the bottom of Tennessee Valley. From there I would strike out into the fog-shrouded narrows of Tennessee Valley itself, cut across the cattle ranch toward the coast, and swing back along the headlands toward the upper end of Tam Valley. I had a favorite canyon there, steep and wild with great arching bay trees. It was called Devil’s Kitchen—the headwaters of Coyote Creek—the beginning of the watershed.

I was particularly interested in the creeks and marshes. Steelhead used to summer in a big pool next door to our house, and the rocky bottom was filled with mysterious hydras, water mites, and flatworms. The Tennessee Valley marsh was alive with the calls of redwing blackbirds and tree frogs, the huge orb webs of shamrock spiders and the head-spinning aroma of pennyroyal. Little ponds held the magic of dragonfly nymphs, frog eggs, and pillbug. My knowledge of insects, plants, and aquatic life grew. With friends or alone, I haunted the wild places, exploring, learning, playing, hiking, and building forts. It was a wonderful place to be a child.

Not long after we moved, the entire marsh at the valley’s lower end was filled and another tract called Crest Marin was built upon it. The Tam Valley marsh was a salt marsh. No one apparently knew then that salt marshes are the richest habitats for life of any natural community anywhere on earth, and no one seemed to notice that salt marshes were the flood plains which absorbed the pressure of high tides and heavy winter runoff. The creek was channeled between earthen dikes, which led the water toward Richardson Bay.

As the years went by, the valley began to change. The Mosquito Abatement District sprayed the creek more often, and I watched sadly as great masses of dead mayfly nymphs piled up like sand bars in the creek bottom. More houses were built at the upper end of the watershed. Traffic increased on Highway 1. Tamalpais Valley Elementary School was built on fill placed in the beautiful Tennessee Valley Marsh, and, as a fifth grader, I attended class there the first year it opened (1952). And each year we waited with apprehension for the heavy December rains. Many times the creek flooded, transformed from a flower-choked summer trickle into a rampaging, muddy torrent. Many times we scraped up the mud and dried damaged belongings.

Though all of the Tam Valley marsh and half of the marsh in Tennessee Valley had been filled, I continued to visit what remained. Most of the Tam Valley hillsides I used to frequent had been built up, so that by the time I was a student at Tam High my outdoor explorations were confined primarily to the still-wild regions along Tennessee Valley Road.

While I was away at college, I saw little of the two valleys, but each time I returned I found that I had lost another part of my heritage. The bottom corner of the Tennessee Valley marsh was filled for houses, and the school filled most of what remained for an athletic field. The great entrance gate for Marinello was built opposite our favorite oak, and the soil from exposed road-cuts was washed by winter rains into the choked remnant of marsh at the bottom of the valley. When I returned after several years to Devil’s Kitchen, it was filled with houses. The wild azaleas, giant horsetails, and fort-like bays were gone.

The residents of Tam Valley—those naive, innocent people such as my parents who were dumb enough to buy a
almost everything I know about the natural world I learned during those years. Those years cannot be repeated; every wild place of significance which I knew as a kid is gone, transformed, sanitized, "brought up to standard." I realized, standing in that desolate asphalt and weed-covered school yard, that when I wrote LIVING WATER, a story about the Sierras and the mighty watershed of the Sacramento River, I was really writing an eulogy for the little watersheds of my childhood creeks.

I thought again about my Tam Valley childhood, and I realized that almost everything I know about the natural world I learned during those years. Those years cannot be repeated; every wild place of significance which I knew as a kid is gone, transformed, sanitized, "brought up to standard." I realized, standing in that desolate asphalt and weed-covered school yard, that when I wrote LIVING WATER, a story about the Sierras and the mighty watershed of the Sacramento River, I was really writing an eulogy for the little watersheds of my childhood creeks.
Forever Fernwood

by Joan Murray

Tennessee Valley Road is the dividing line between Sausalito and Tamalpais Valley, and even though the Mill Valley city limits are over a mile away, the address at Forever Fernwood Cemetery is Mill Valley, California. Consisting of thirty-two acres that are primarily mixed forest and grassland, only two to three acres are reserved for burials. It's home to the remains of over two thousand; a quiet, bucolic space with the distant buzz of Highway 101 and the weekday sound of children's voices from Tam Valley School, echoing up the hill.

Those visiting Fernwood can enjoy the views of Marin hills, now studded with homes, with Mount Tamalpais rising above them.

If you were to ask locals about the closest cemetery, Forever Fernwood probably would not come to mind. Yet burials have been taking place there for over one hundred years: the first burial was of Catherine Domergue of Sausalito, who died on December 15, 1891.

Throughout the United States, particularly near the end of the 19th century as the demand for land increased, many burial grounds were simply built over or their human remains removed to the rural outskirts of towns and cities. Sausalito was faced with such a challenge in the late 1880s at Sunny Hill, also known as the Sausalito Cemetery. The earliest reports about the needs for a new cemetery are found in the Sausalito News in 1885. Sunny Hill, located above Rodeo Avenue, was steep and there was an urgent need for more burial space that would not be limited by the inevitable growth of the town. Residents wanted to preserve a peaceful place for their dead and so pur-
chased property from the Sausalito Land & Ferry Company. The new cemetery was located across from Coyote Creek in Tamalpais Valley, then sometimes referred to as Coyote Hollow.

The Sausalito News reported in its May 8, 1891 edition, that in response to residents' concerns about cemetery removals, a new company called the Sausalito Cemetery Association "intends making a cemetery on the proposed site suitable, desirable, and lasting, as well as ornamental." It's easy to understand why friends and families of those buried in Sunny Hill wanted assurances that they would not have to move their loved ones' remains again. In March of 1892, the association authorized the purchase of property from the Sausalito Land & Ferry Company and at the same meeting adopted by-laws and articles of incorporation. Although the deed was filed on September 15th of the same year, the name "Fernwood" was not applied until 1903.

A position on the board of the cemetery association was an important assignment. By 1899, trustees earned $10 per meeting and a free plot for their service, and by 1908, a trustee earned $35 for attending each meeting.

AN ESTABLISHED CEMETERY

The cemetery association was reincorporated in 1929, but records are scant over the ensuing years. By 1950, the grounds were terribly neglected and vandals had damaged or destroyed grave markers and monuments, and a tombstone of the Nunez family was stolen. At the end of November 1951, plot holders of the Sausalito Cemetery Association took over "to put the affairs of the association in order." Six hundred-thirty plot owners were mailed proxies to vote on a potential sale. The proposed owner was a San Francisco mortician who wanted to assess new monthly fees and would have gained entire control of the property and its human remains. It is unclear what the results of the vote were.

During the 1950s, cemetery records were said to have been destroyed in a fire, but no evidence of that has been found in local news sources, nor can long-time residents recall or confirm that a fire occurred at Fernwood. Since the grounds were poorly managed, it's possible that the burial records were too, hence their disappearance.

Another group of investors made significant plans to update and expand the cemetery in 1959. One of their proposals was to erect a seven-foot statue of Jesus Christ, with outstretched arms. Again, what happened to the implementation of these plans of the cemetery's renewal have not yet been located.

That same year, the Barreiros family crypt was broken into and the remains of M.F. Barreiros, buried in 1904, disappeared. Not until 1972, when the Daphne family purchased the cemetery, did any real improvements begin. A crematorium was erected and some grounds cleanup occurred.

MYSTERY HUMAN REMAINS APPEAR IN 2008

Local resident Kathy Kirkland's recollection of local lore led to the identification of a different sort of burial at Fernwood. Kathy's family has lived continuously in Tennessee Valley since 1876, and four generations of her ancestors are buried in...
the cemetery. In 2008, Fernwood employees found the partial remains of a woman outside the normal burial area. Due to the age and condition of the remains, there weren't many clues for the coroner to investigate. He did, however, knock on cemetery neighbors' doors to see what they knew about any missing persons reported in the 1960s. He narrowed the search to that decade because of the discoveries of a metal cap to a bottle of aspirin, eyeglass frames, and a 1961 penny that were found near the remains. Kathy recalled that in 1964, Tam Valley resident, Gertrude Jones, disappeared and was never found. The disappearance was suspicious at the time, since Mrs. Jones' longshoreman husband told the sheriff that he and his wife argued before she left the home on foot. Mr. Jones told the sheriff that his wife did not want to add his name to a deed to property held in her name.

TODAY'S FERNWOOD

Walking through Forever Fernwood today is such a pleasure. There is still the Portuguese Trail, named for the many local ranchers, dairy farmers, and others who came from the Azores in the 19th century. There are many Portuguese names to be found in the cemetery, along with burials of many other nationalities and ethnicities.

Today, a person can be buried at Fernwood in a shroud, a wicker basket or a plain pine casket. Gravestones can be adorned with eclectic memorabilia, decorative tiles, an herb garden or a sculpture. One can buy a "Forever LifeStory," a video that is today's version of yesterday's diary or journal. It consists of digitally stored photographs, video clips, audio clips, letters and other mementos. Leaving a memorial for family to digitally meet and learn about their relatives is part of today's new approach to life after death.

Purchased in 2004 by Forever Enterprises and Memorial Ecosystems, the new owners have developed Fernwood as a "green" cemetery. In drought-prone Marin County, the traditional orderly rows of graves in verdant green lawns are an outdated mode of interment. The idea of a more natural setting for burial in today's environmentally challenged world seems right for our times. Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) units are buried with the body and can later be located with handheld electronic devices. No longer will descendants wander the hills searching for gravestones.

In addition to the green approach to death, the current owners of Fernwood have put forth enormous efforts and capital to restore the grounds. They employ four employees as fulltime groundskeepers. Non-native eucalyptus is being removed, allowing the native oak and bay to flourish. In that process, overgrown gravestones have recently been uncovered.

When the original burials occurred at Fernwood, the view across the valley was spectacular, uninterrupted by trees and homes. One could see the marsh before it was filled so homes could be built in the flats of Tamalpais Valley; Richardson Bay before there was a bridge, and the unobstructed view of the hills and Mount Tamalpais. The homes in the valley and covering the hills will remain, but what has returned to Fernwood is a vision that was shared by others over a hundred years ago.

On August 3, 1908 William Patterson caught the 8:17 AM train for Mill Valley at the Sausalito ferry terminal. He had walked down San Carlos Ave from Sylvan Dell, a cottage up in the hills. There were a few other kids on the train that Monday morning. Earlier in the year, some of them took an earlier train to get to San Rafael High School. But today they were all headed for opening day at the brand new Tamalpais High School. They got off at the Mill Valley Junction depot, and walked up the County Road to the new school. The school's address was Mill Valley Junction. Two days later, the school would have its own train platform stop called High School.

Principal/teacher, Ernest E. Wood, welcomed 40 freshman, many graduates of Mill Valley Grammar School, Homestead School and Central School in Sausalito, plus 21 sophomores, five juniors, and four seniors, most of whom had attended San Rafael High School.

Sophomore William Patterson had been a freshman at Oakland High School. A few months earlier his mother had taken a live-in job as cook for Mrs. Georgia Martin and her daughter at Sylvan Dell. William's mother, Mary Galt, was born a slave in 1850 on a cotton plantation near Norfolk, Virginia. The white master, her grandfather, freed his slaves in 1860 and sent them to California. Mary married James Edward Patterson, who was born in St. Vincent, a British colony in the West Indies. William was born in San Francisco on August 27, 1891.

Patterson was the only African-American at Tamalpais High School. His first impression was favorable. In his autobiography written six decades later he states, "The location was in the midst of unsurpassed natural beauty. The climate was ideal and the environment was conducive to educational achievement."

TAM HIGH SCHOOL
In Patterson's first year as a sophomore, the school had four teachers: Ernest E. Wood (History), Miss Elizabeth Keyser (English), Miss Grace Pack (Science, Math) and Miss Schone Kurlandzik (German, French, Latin). Patterson played on the baseball team as pitcher and third baseman.

For the 1909/1910 school year, Mr. Wood added two faculty members: W. S. Stone (commercial subjects) and Alfred Guillou (Drawing, Mechanics). In early February, under the tutelage of Miss Keyser, Patterson started "The Tamalpais Daily", a single sheet posted on the bulletin board. It evolved into a several page weekly. He was part of the 13-member staff (also supervised by Miss Keyser) which published the 1910 yearbook called, "Tamalpais Graduate." He played center on the football team, and was on the track team (100-yard dash and relay team).

As a senior, Patterson played right field on the baseball team, and although no longer on the staff of the 1911 "Tamalpais Graduate," he contributed three poems to it. One poem, entitled "History of Class of 1911," ran to seven stanzas of four lines each. He was 20 years old when he graduated in 1911. There would not be another African-American graduate from Tamalpais High School until 1945.
TAM HIGH RETROSPECTIVE

In his autobiography Patterson looks back on Tam High as the place where he was introduced to progressive thinking through contact with two faculty members who remained his close friends for many years: Miss Elizabeth Keyser and Mr. Alfred Guillou. When he unburdened himself to Miss Keyser about the prejudice he encountered on the athletic field, she told him this was part of life's struggles and that one had to keep one's chin up and fight back. Her sympathy and solicitude buoyed up his morale in the face of the hostility of small groups of white boys. Mr. Guillou, head of manual training, seemed to recognize his sensitivity and often talked to him about a form of society in which skin color would play no part. He gave Patterson a copy of Karl Marx's Das Kapital which he found quite incomprehensible—he put it aside until later years.
1911 TO 1914

Having graduated from Tam High with a good education and a commendable record of extra-curricular activities, Paterson was accepted as a special student at UC-Berkeley where he took the usual introductory courses in humanities. He lived alone in a furnished room in San Francisco. Eye trouble caused him to abandon his studies. He took a job as third cook on a Pacific Mail steamship running to Panama. On one trip he arrived two days after the Canal opened in 1914 and took part in the celebrations. When his eyes improved he returned to UC-Berkeley to study engineering. He soon decided to give up engineering studies and go to law school.

1915 TO 1919

In 1915 he enrolled in Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. He took a job as a night clerk at the Taylor Hotel from 8 PM to 8 AM, living in a small basement room adjoining the maid's kitchen.

His extra-curricular interest in publications of the NAACP, the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marxist literature increased his understanding of Black America's quest to attain equal rights. He met and was greatly influenced by Anita Whitney, a suffragette, socialist and member of the American Communist Party.

[Anita Whitney would later be convicted under California's Criminal Syndicalism Act for allegedly helping to establish the Communist Labor Party, an instrument of violence to overthrow the government. A 1927 landmark U.S. Supreme Court unanimous decision upheld her conviction, but the governor of California pardoned her. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the infamous decision. —ed.]

In 1918, William Patterson, known to his friends as Pat, attended a Black Elks Lodge picnic where the discussion turned to The Great War. He got up on a table and declared the war was a "white man's war" and that blacks should play no part in it. Two black sailors reported his remarks to the military police. Pat was arrested, turned over to Oakland city authorities and held incommunicado for five days. At his trial, the charges could not be proven and he was released.

Pat received his law degree in 1919 but he failed to pass the California bar examinations. A few blacks who had previously passed the bar told him that his militancy and arrest had likely influenced the examiners' decision to flunk him.

In August 1919, he left San Francisco and took a job as a cook on a ship headed for England. After it landed in Grimsby, he jumped ship and spent a few days in London where two contacts, one white, one black, talked him out of his plan to seek work in Liberia. They advised him to return to the U.S. to further the struggle of black people. He got his old job back on the same ship for the return trip to the U.S.

LAWYER, COMMUNIST, ACTIVIST

Pat got a job as a longshoreman and found a room in Harlem. Living in the same house was the future wife of Paul Robeson, at that time a law student at Columbia, but also an athlete, actor, singer and civil rights activist. Pat and Paul became very good friends.

Pat passed the New York bar exam and formed a Harlem law partnership with two other black lawyers. In 1927 after participating in a protest in Boston against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, he bought a copy of the Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. He joined the Communist Party and was soon selected to make a trip to the Soviet Union. He spent three years there studying at the University of the Toiling People of the Far East and traveling to many of the Eastern Socialist Republics.

Upon his return to New York in March 1931, his first assignment was to the post of Communist Party organizer in Harlem. Other assignments followed in Pittsburgh and New York. In 1938 he moved to Chicago as associate editor of the Daily Record. He became a leader in the Communist Party and head of the International Labor Defense, a group that offered legal representation to communists, trade unionists, and African-Americans. He participated in several famous cases involving issues of political or racial persecution. He was active in the Civil Rights Congress. In 1953 he and Paul Robeson presented a document entitled, "We Charge Genocide," to the United Nations, charging the U.S. federal government with complicity in genocide for failing to take action against lynching.

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