

Inherited vice

With *Wicked Sacramento*, historian William Burg probes the capital city's indecent past

BY SCOTT THOMAS ANDERSON / scotta@newsreview.com

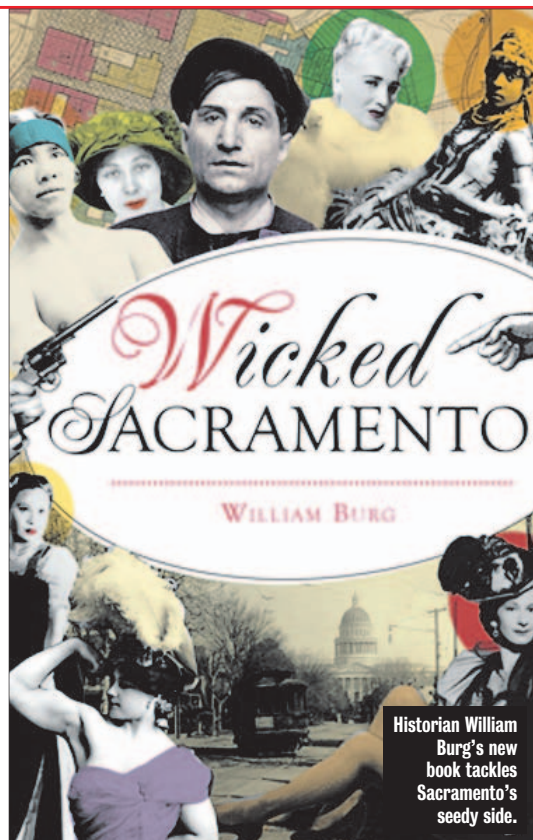


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There's a little Jekyll and Hyde in every city, and now a local historian is torch-lighting the shadows that provided Sacramento so much intrigue during its heyday of vice.

Later this month, William Burg will begin a public lecture series about his new book *Wicked Sacramento*, which delves into the capital nightlife's love affair with all manner of gambling, bootlegging, exotic drugs, political scandals and sex workers.

But the author said the purpose of his exploration isn't to titillate so much as show the kinds of abuses that happen when "civic-minded Sacramentans" try to hide impulses they don't want others to see.

"People have this idea that Sacramento was a bucolic farm town where nothing much happened, but the more I looked at the historic record, the more I realized that just wasn't the case," Burg told SN&R.

"We were always a dynamic, energetic city. The intent of this project is to write those people who didn't get into the history books back in."

Burg spent the last three years balancing his time between research and his ongoing efforts as a historic preservationist in the city. Burg's earlier books—*Sacramento Renaissance* and *Midtown Sacramento: Creative Soul of the City*—have received stellar reader reviews on a host of platforms.

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author, *Wicked Sacramento*

Now that *Wicked Sacramento* is being published by History Press, Burg is ready to discuss with the public what he learned about his rebellious cast of real-life characters.

On June 25 at 7 p.m., Burg will be at the Sacramento Historical Society to focus on brothel queen Cherry de Saint Maurice, controversial jazz advocate Grant Cross and nightclub owner and boxing manager Ancil Hoffman. Admission is \$5 for nonmembers.

On June 26 at 6 p.m., Burg will give a different lecture at the Lavender Library and Cultural Exchange, this time focusing on local transgender pioneer Tamara Rees.

Then, on June 28 at 6 p.m., he'll appear at Capital Books at 1011 K Street for a discussion of gambling legend Frank "Butch" Nisetich and his notorious Equipose Cafe.

Burg said that, as with his book, a theme will run through his lectures.

"Many of Sacramento's responses to these issues were part of what was then called 'the progressive movement,' but today would be considered racism, segregation and the end of a neighborhood legacy," he said. "So, while there may have been a lot of vice, the city's worst crime was its own racist policies." □

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