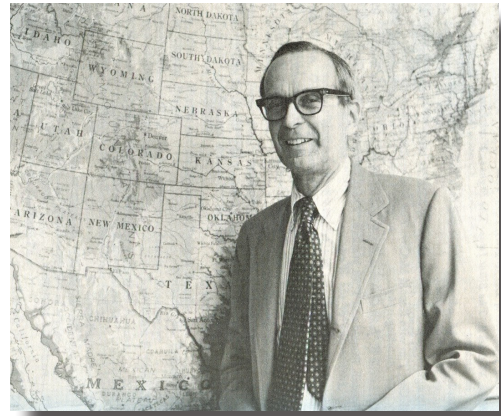


## Rodman W. Paul (1912 - 1987)

Rodman Wilson Paul was the sixteenth President of the Western History Association, serving from 1977 to 1978. A historian of mining and agriculture with a primary focus on California, Paul gained his first experience of the West “taking the cure” in Arizona in 1931-32. By Paul’s reckoning, that year transformed him thereafter “into a westerner with an eastern accent.”



Paul was born November 6, 1912 in Philadelphia, grew up in Milton, Massachusetts, and received his A.B. (1936), M.A. (1937), and Ph.D. (1943) from Harvard University, where he was a student of Frederick Merk. He served in the Naval Reserve from 1943 to 1946 and spent the following summer as a fellow at the Huntington Library. A one-year instructorship at Yale (1946-47) ensued. In the fall of 1947, he moved to the California Institute of Technology and remained there for the remainder of his career. As Chair of Humanities and Social Sciences, he became the first Edward S. Harkness Professor of History in 1972 and twice won university-wide awards for undergraduate teaching before retiring to emeritus status in 1981. He was also instrumental in shaping the western history collections at the nearby Huntington Library.

Paul’s 1936 senior thesis won Harvard’s Phi Kappa Theta essay prize, showing his early promise as a historian. Though Herbert E. Bolton initially discouraged him from embarking on a topic so large, Paul’s revised dissertation on the California gold rush, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (1947; reprint 1965), became the standard on the topic. His second major work, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (1963; reprint 2001 with additional chapters by Elliott West), provided a synthesis of western economic and social history. *The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900*, published posthumously with the assistance of Martin Ridge (1988; reprint 1998), reasserted mining as a central element in western history. Paul also edited *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West: The Reminiscences of Mary Hallock Foote* (1972) and authored key articles on agriculture, Mormon history, Chinese exclusion, and Western historiography.

His service included a term on the NASA Historical Advisory Committee (1970-1973), three terms as the WHA representative on the National Archives Advisory Council (1968-76), and the presidency of the AHA-Pacific Coast Branch (1981-82). The California Historical Society recognized Paul in 1984 with the Henry R. Wagner Memorial Award, three years before his death on May 15, 1987 at his home in Pasadena, California.

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### Authored by:

Steven M. Fountain, Washington State University Vancouver