

April 22, 2016 | By Cynthia Dillon

## UC San Diego History Professor Receives Treasured First-Book Award

University of California San Diego's Mark G. Hanna recently earned the 2016 Frederick Jackson Turner Award, an annual prize from the [Organization of American Historians](#) given for an author's first scholarly book about a certain aspect of American history. Hanna, an associate professor in the Department of History, earned the prestigious award for his book, "Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570 – 1740" (University of North Carolina Press), which demonstrates that pirates were essential to the patterns of development that shaped early America.

"Until recently, piracy has been relegated to the margins of the narrative that we tell about early America," explained Hanna. "University professors rarely mention piracy at all in their survey lecture courses or in textbooks. I hope this book compels historians to include the pivotal role that sea marauding played in early settlement, plantation and colonial political and economic development. Americans need to confront the nation's piratical past."

In the course of his research, Hanna learned that many of the sailors who participated in blatant acts of piracy actually settled down with their plunder in the Americas, buying land, marrying local women and likely never taking to sea again.

"They did not resemble the swashbuckling characters we imagine today—crazy anarchists at war with 'normal' society," noted Hanna.

The Organization of American Historians recognized Hanna's book for its wide-ranging and learned reinterpretation of piracy, noting, "A stunning work of social, legal and cultural history, Hanna's elegant prose sits lightly atop a considerable foundation of innovative research."



*Professor Mark Hanna. Photo: UC San Diego, Department of History*



Mark Hanna talks about his book at the Maritime Museum of San Diego. Photo: Maritime Museum of San Diego

The organization referred to the book as “an ambitious narrative that traces the varied ways that pirates contributed to the development of Britain’s overseas settlements”—from the Red Sea to the Jamestown settlement—by providing the goods and the money that built the empire while inspiring expansionism.

Hanna’s work reveals that in the colonial port cities of the Americas, pirates were often supported by the very merchants, financiers and lawmakers assumed to be their archenemies. Not only did these prominent figures launder pirates’ plunder, but they also cleared their reputations allowing many former renegades to gain respectability and play key roles in colonial society. In fact, Hanna’s research

indicates that many pirates were aspiring capitalists, eager to join the ranks of the land-based colonial elite.

“This book is really my life’s work to this date, so it certainly feels validating,” acknowledged Hanna, who said that he was exhilarated by the award because his book competed with a number of quality works covering the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Hanna recently won the UC San Diego Academic Senate Distinguished Teacher Award and serves as the honorary curator of the Hill Collection of Pacific Voyages in UC San Diego Library’s Special Collections & Archives. He also recently was named the Endowed Chair of Maritime History at the Maritime Museum of San Diego. The Department of History in the UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities, ranks in the top 30 nationally according to U.S. News & World Report.

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