

*Pierre Charles de Saint-Amant and French Visions
of the Pacific Slope in the Gold Rush Era*

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Application for Research Support
Faculty Development Committee
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Project Description

I. Conception and Definition of the Research Project

I am writing to apply for research support funds for a book project: *Pierre Charles de Saint-Amant and French Visions of the Pacific Slope in the Gold Rush Era*. The faculty development funds would be used for a course release in the next academic year (2015-16) to devote time to project and for the purchase relevant historical monographs (secondary sources). Last fall I presented a preliminary essay on the project at the Western History Association annual meeting in Portland, Oregon. Entitled “The Imperial Eye: French Travelers on the Pacific Slope,” the paper afforded me the opportunity to delve into the historical context of the new study and to compile comprehensive research bibliographies on published primary and secondary sources as well as archival collections in the United States and France. I am currently working with my collaborator on the project, Dr. Elizabeth Van Allen, to prepare a book proposal, including a sample chapter translation for the University of Nebraska Press, a leading publisher of scholarly documentary editions.

Pierre Charles de Saint-Amant and French Visions of the Pacific Slope in the Gold Rush Era builds on my previous book, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859* (2015), by broadening the scope of my investigations to include not only the Pacific Slope, but also the global dimensions of the California Gold Rush (1849) and the emergence of the Second French Empire (1852-1870). Indeed, the title of my first book *At the Heath of the Crossed Races* is a quote from Saint-Amant about his comments on French Prairie, the French-Indian community in Oregon that he visited as part of his travels to the West Coast. As noted, I am collaborating with Dr. Elizabeth Van Allen, a scholar trained in both modern French history and documentary editing, on this project.

Together we will produce a scholarly, annotated translation of Saint Amant's travel memoir of his journey to California, Oregon, and the Pacific region on the eve of the emergence of the Second French Empire. Saint-Amant was a foreign service envoy dispatched to the Pacific Slope and the Pacific by officials of the Second Republic prior to its dissolution in 1851. His mission was to collect information for the foreign ministry on these regions as they were emerging areas of global competition between the United States and European nations such as Great Britain and France.

Saint-Amant's travel memoir *Voyages en Californie and dans l'Orégon* (1854) has yet to be translated into English, and therefore, remains sparsely used by American historians. With this project, Dr. Van Allen and I will produce a comprehensive and professional translation with authoritative footnotes and an important introductory essay that provides background information on Saint Amant, his mission, the state of French affairs at home and abroad, and the global dimensions of the gold rush. While Dr. Van Allen is trained in French history and documentary editing, I am a specialist in American West history and the history of French North Americans in the trans-Mississippi West.

II. Plan and Methodology

As regards the methodology for the book project, on the one hand Dr. Van Allen and I will follow a standard research methodology for the historical profession in that we will analyze both archival and published primary sources that document American history and French history from the 1840s through the 1850s. On the other hand, we will follow established practices for the documentary editing and scholarly translation fields. Both of these fields require an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter (American history and French history) based on a close study of

the historiography (secondary sources), familiarity with primary sources of the time period, and a proficiency in the French language. Both Dr. Van Allen and I are fluent in French and have conducted research on French and English language documents. Dr. Van Allen received her Ph.D. in modern French History from Yale University and has extensive experience in documentary editing, including the Civil War Governors of Kentucky Digital Documentary Edition.

Dr. Van Allen and I will take particular care to analyze Saint-Amant's travel memoir against the documentary record generated by French officials and travelers, Anglo-Americans, immigrants, and other cultural groups that he encountered in his travels. Finally, in keeping with standard historical methods, we will integrate the analysis of the primary sources with an analysis of the secondary scholarly literature on the American West, the Pacific Slope, the California Gold Rush, the Second French Republic, and the Second French Empire.

III. Significance of the Project

This new book project is an exciting endeavor that will allow Dr. Van Allen and I to contribute to the established literature on the California Gold Rush, as well as the global dimensions of American Western history and the French encounter with the American West. Travel accounts are valuable sources of historical research: they provide essential information on the people and regions encountered by traveler writers, as well as insights into the mentality, culture, and perspectives of the travelers themselves. By producing a modern, scholarly translation of Saint-Amant's *Voyages en Californie and dans l'Orégon*, we will be able to make a valuable resource more readily available to American historians and students of Western history and also contribute to the growing transnational literature on the global connections between the American West and Europe, notably France.

As was my intention with *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, it is my long-standing objective to contribute to a better understanding of the role and experience of French-speaking peoples in the American West. What can a literate French traveler tell us about the California Gold Rush and the Pacific Slope during the 1850s? What were his impressions of the large French immigrant community in California? Why did so many French people immigrate to California at the time? How did the political and economic disruptions in France contribute to the Euro-American colonization of the Pacific Slope? How did Saint-Amant's views compare with those of the incoming Anglo-Americans who quickly seized the reigns of political and economic power in California following the Mexican War and the transfer of California from Mexican to American jurisdiction? These are the central questions that Dr. Van. Allen and I shall address in this study, which will contribute to the historiography on the Francophones in the American West and the scholarship on the global dimensions of French imperial ambitions after the fall of the Second Republic in 1851.

Itemized Budget

Course release (2015-16)	\$3,870.00
Historical monographs	<u>\$ 280.00</u>
	\$4,150.00