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If walls could talk: an intimate history of the home, Lucy Worsley (book review)

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compelling work for World War II history buffs or anyone who wants to understand how such devastating evil emerged while the world seemingly watched. [See Prepub Alert, 9/22/11.]—**Mary A. Jennings, Sno-Isle Libs., Camano Island, WA**

☆**Nathans, Sydney. To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker. Harvard Univ. Feb. 2012. c.346p. illus. index. ISBN 9780674062122. \$29.95. HIST**

Prior to the Civil War, thousands of African Americans escaped from slavery, but because few recorded their experiences little is known about their efforts to forge new lives in freedom. Mary Walker, the focus of this study, was a light-skinned fugitive who escaped from a North Carolina planter couple when she accompanied them to Philadelphia in 1848. Her history, though unique in many ways, is illustrative of the hardships and challenges such migrants faced and the support they sometimes received from abolitionist networks. Her efforts to preserve her freedom, gain economic independence, and locate and purchase the freedom of her children still held as slaves is pieced together here by Nathans (history, emeritus, Duke Univ.; *Quest for Progress: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1870–1920*) from the papers of Northern abolitionists and Southern slaveholders. **VERDICT** The result is an engrossing and readable study, thoroughly researched and well documented, that fills a significant gap in the history of the period. It is recommended for all readers seriously interested in the experience of fugitive slaves in antebellum America.—**Theresa McDevitt, Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania Lib.**

☆**Siler, Julia Flynn. Lost Kingdom: Hawaii's Last Queen, the Sugar Kings, and America's First Imperial Adventure. Atlantic Monthly. Jan. 2012. c.448p. bibliog. ISBN 9780802120014. \$30. HIST**

In Siler's second book (after *The House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty*), she brings to life the story of America's annexation of the sovereign Hawaiian Islands. She begins when Christian missionaries from Boston landed on Hawaii in 1820—when Western powers truly began to influence Hawaiian affairs—and follows the birth and life of Lili'uokalani, the woman who would become the last queen of Hawaii. American sugar planters, the self-styled Sugar Kings, slowly took over most of the arable land on the islands, while Lili'uokalani's elder brother King David Kalākaua became deeply indebted to them. He eventually sought a loan from England to pay off the Sugar Kings. Several countries, including America, England, and

France, looked to the Pacific for colonial expansion and became embroiled in the controversies in Hawaii until American forces deposed Lili'uokalani against the will of the vast majority of native Hawaiians. **VERDICT** Siler gives readers a sweeping tale of tragedy, greed, betrayal, and imperialism. The depth of her research shines through the narrative, and the lush prose and quick pace make for engaging reading. Anyone interested in Hawaiian history or American imperialism will find this an absorbing read. [See Prepub Alert, 7/10/11.]—**Crystal Goldman, San Jose State Univ. Lib., CA**

Sweeney, Jon M. The Pope Who Quit: A True Medieval Tale of Mystery, Death, and Salvation. Image: Crown. Mar. 2012. c.224p. index. ISBN 9780385531894. pap. \$14. HIST

Born of humble birth in an Italian village, Peter Morrone spent much of his life as a hermit monk who inspired many followers. He was improbably elected pope, as Celestine V, in 1294 and reigned for five tumultuous months before becoming the first and only pope to abdicate. His reign was spent outside of Rome, and his poorly judged actions alienated many cardinals. After his resignation, he was imprisoned by his papal successor, Boniface VIII. Sweeney posits that Celestine may have been murdered on Boniface's order, but the author's prose style lacks a dramatic power equal to the events being narrated. Nonetheless, he draws a relatively well-rounded portrait of the pope, including contextual details of medieval cultural, political, and religious life likely to be unknown to the lay reader to whom this book is aimed. **VERDICT** Readers with more than a cursory knowledge of the Middle Ages will be frustrated by the number of overgeneralizations and suppositions, although they may admire Sweeney's efforts to make sense of such a complicated time. There is no recent comparable biography of Celestine V in English, although readers may wish to consult reference materials related to Catholicism and the Catholic Church. Some fans of fiction like Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* might want to consider this.—**Sharon E. Reidt, Marlboro Coll. Lib., VT**

Taubman, Philip. The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and Their Quest To Ban the Bomb. Harper: HarperCollins. Jan. 2012. c.496p. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780061744006. \$27.99. HIST

For over 65 years the world has worried about nuclear weapons. In January 2007 four prominent American statesmen published a letter in the *Wall Street Journal* advocating the ultimate removal of all nuclear weapons from the earth. Two former sec-

retaries of state, George Schultz and Henry Kissinger; a former secretary of defense, William Perry; and Sam Nunn, former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, crafted a collective statement calling for the eventual abolition of these weapons. Taubman, retired longtime reporter for the *New York Times*, traces how these four men came together in the early 21st century, and, advised by Sidney Drell, an accomplished physicist and technical adviser to Kissinger and Schultz, shook off their Cold War mentalities to promote a new conversation about the insanity of building, maintaining, and using nuclear weapons. Although supported at the outset by President Obama, the going has been slow; the abolition of nuclear weapons remains a dream. Yet, as Taubman shows, without the gravitas of these well-regarded cold warriors and their willingness to step into the fray in the twilight of their careers, the conversation would never have begun. **VERDICT** A well-written and extensively researched book, recommended for both general and scholarly audiences. [See Prepub Alert, 7/25/11.]—**Ed Goedeken, Iowa State Univ. Lib., Ames**

Worsley, Lucy. If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home. Walker. Mar. 2012. c.368p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780802779953. \$27. HIST

Was tea once considered a dangerous drink? How often did people bathe hundreds of years ago? With the lack of household privacy during many eras, where did people go to be alone? Worsley (chief curator, Historic Royal Palaces; *The Courtiers: Splendor and Intrigue in the Georgian Court at Kensington Palace*) explores these and other questions as she looks at four major rooms of the home—bedroom, bathroom, living room, and kitchen. Drawing only from published British history sources, she examines how the uses of these rooms and ways of thinking about them evolved from the medieval era to the modern day in response to technological advances, changing social attitudes, and the constant desire for increased comfort. Worsley's enthusiasm for her subject is apparent, but her organization is somewhat muddled and many of the subjects discussed receive only a cursory glance; this volume, written to accompany a BBC series she hosted for a popular audience, will best please casual readers. **VERDICT** Full of factoids, but with some small errors, this might serve as a good introduction to those new to the history of houses or the study of material culture, but it lacks citations and will not appeal to more serious readers.—**Kathleen McCallister, Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia**

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