William Rorabaugh
Professor Emeritus

Fields of Interest
19th Century  Social History  United States  Urban History

Biography
Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 1976

This page is preserved in memorium of the late William Rorabaugh, who was a beloved member of the History faculty for many years.


The radical changes of the antebellum years somewhat resembled the chaos of the 1960s, another period of massive social change. My third book, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (Oxford, 1989), examined student restlessness (Free Speech Movement), white radicalism (Vietnam Day Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, etc.), black radicalism (Black Panthers), and the counterculture, as well as the connections across the boundaries of these various movements, in an atypical college town that proved to be one important crucible for the Sixties. My focus was on archival research - not my autobiography - and on teasing out the myriad strands of radical thought and practice that permeated those years.

While I have retained a fondness for the Early Republic, most of my research and a good bit of my teaching in recent years have been focused on the 1960s. My fourth book, *Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties* (Cambridge, 2002), looked at the brief sunny moment during the early 1960s when many Americans believed that anything was possible. Convinced that social historians needed to become better versed in political history, I published *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election* (Kansas, 2009), a short revisionist account that corrects Teddy White's badly dated classic.

My current project is a book-length study of the 1960s counterculture. For several years I have taught undergraduate senior seminars on the topic. At the same time, I remain interested in the Early Republic, especially social movements; in the US in the 1960s in a larger sense; and in alcohol and drug policy after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933.