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February 8, 2010

**Food for Thought Presents T.J. Stiles,
Winner of 2009 National Book Award for Nonfiction**

Sacramento – The February event in the California State Library's cultural series, ***Food for Thought: Thinking and Talking at the California State Library***, will be held on **Wednesday, February 17**. This free evening event includes refreshments, an author talk, and a lively discussion.

This month ***Food for Thought*** features author T.J. Stiles discussing *The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*, winner of the 2009 National Book Award for Nonfiction. Vanderbilt was America's first celebrity businessman. In a career that spanned the decades from the War of 1812 to the end of Reconstruction, he played a central role in the rise of the corporation, emergence of Wall Street, and the birth of big business.

"In 1860," said reviewer Bryce Christensen, "The *New York Times* identified the character of Vanderbilt as a symptom of how capitalist competition had ruined American morality. But when a shrewd biographer probes that character, he discovers a surprisingly engaging figure." The result of six years of exhaustive research, *The First Tycoon* restores to readers, and to history, the truth about a man whose dramatic life has long been shrouded in myth and misconception. For this event, author T.J. Stiles will focus on how Vanderbilt's role in the California Gold Rush contributed to the rise of big business in America, as well as many of the dilemmas we face in the current recession.

Other works by Stiles include *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War*, which won the Ambassador Book Award and the Peter Seaborg Award for Civil War Scholarship, and was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. Stiles has also written for the *New York Times Book Review*, *Smithsonian*, and *Salon.com*, among other publications.

The California State Library launched ***Food for Thought*** because it believes that libraries and the free expression of ideas are essential to a healthy democracy. ***Food for Thought*** is a unique monthly venue where history buffs and thinking people talk freely about ideas and issues. By helping Californians stay intellectually invigorated, the California State Library is taking an active role in shaping the future of this great state.



Join us on **Wednesday, February 17** from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm in the California History Room, Room 200, Library & Courts Building II, 900 N Street, Sacramento. Doors open at 5:00 pm; the program begins at 6:00 pm with time for discussion afterward. Metered street parking is free after 6:00 pm; the closest light rail access is 8th and O. Seating in this venue is limited, so attendees must RSVP to Rebecca Ann Fontaine at (916) 653-9942 or rfontaine@library.ca.gov.

***Food for Thought* is made possible by generous donations from the
California State Library Foundation**

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