

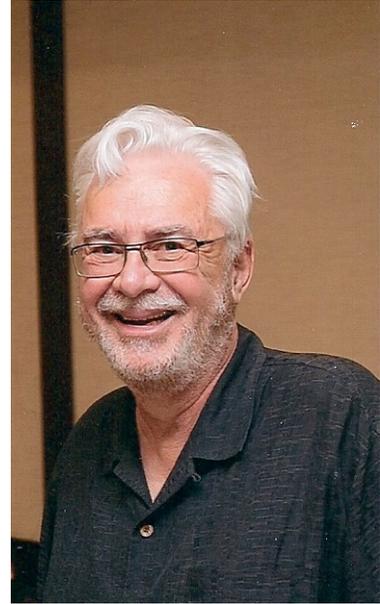
Richard Charles Sutch, 1942-2019

Sandra Batie, Susan B. Carter, Roger Ransom

Richard Charles Sutch, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Economics, University of California Riverside and Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, died peacefully on September 19, 2019 at his home in Kensington, California. The cause of death was merkel cell carcinoma. He was 76 years old.

Sutch will be remembered as a gregarious, exuberant, creative, hardworking, and witty person filled with love for family, colleagues, and friends. He loved to gather people together for evenings of his wonderful gourmet meals punctuated with good wine and great conversation. When traveling he always knew the best restaurants and would frequently include a side trip to a unique food-oriented site—such as an oyster shucking plant. He will be missed by many.

Professor Sutch made enduring contributions in a variety of fields. As a high school student he was a founding member of the Richland (WA) Rocket Society, the first amateur group in the nation to launch a documented, two-stage rocket. It reached an altitude of over a mile. As an undergraduate at the University of Washington he wrote a senior thesis on the profitability of slavery that was published in the *Southern Economic Journal* and reprinted several times. As a graduate student at MIT, he wrote a thesis on the term structure of interest rates and co-authored articles with Franco Modigliani that have garnered more than a thousand citations. As a professor at the University of California, Berkeley he collaborated with Roger Ransom to form the Southern Economic History Project in 1969. The SEHP was responsible for publication of several articles dealing with slavery, emancipation, and the rise of debt peonage in the postbellum South. The project also supervised the collection of data on Southern farms in 1860, 1870, and 1880 that formed the basis for their book, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* which was published in 1977. The book, now in its second edition, remains in print after 42 years and has been cited over a thousand times. In the early 1990s, in collaboration with Ransom and Susan Carter, he launched the Historical Labor Statistics Project to collect, code, and harmonize the many state labor bureau worker surveys conducted in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In the late 1990s he spearheaded an effort on behalf of the academic community to compile a new edition of *Historical Statistics of the United States*, a core reference work that had not been updated in over 30 years.



The effort culminated in the publication of a 5-volume work providing a comprehensive compendium of statistics drawn from over a thousand sources and recording every aspect of the numerical history of the United States. In addition, he made notable contributions on such diverse topics as immigration, wealth inequality, saving and retirement, the economics of John Maynard Keynes, and the adoption and diffusion of hybrid corn. He was an institution-builder, playing a pivotal role in the founding of the All-University of California Group in Economic History in the 1970s, a restructuring of the Economic History Association in the late 1980s, and the reform of the International Economic History Association in the early 2000s.

Among his many honors were a Ford Faculty Research Fellowship; Guggenheim Fellowship; Distinguished Teacher Award; Clio Award for Exceptional Support to the Field of Cliometrics; the Arthur H. Cole Prize for best article in the *Journal of Economic History*; President, Economic History Association; Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar and Distinguished Lecturer; President, International Economic History Association; Japan-US Friendship Commission Visiting Distinguished Scholar; Fellow, American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS); Thomas Jefferson Prize from The Society for History in the Federal Government; Fellow, Cliometric Society; Distinguished Alumnus, Economics, University of Washington; Edward A. Dickson Distinguished Emeritus Professor, University of California Office of the President; Founders Prize for best article in *Social Science History*; and numerous research grants from agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institute for Aging, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council.

Richard Charles Sutch was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota during the early years of America's involvement in World War II. His father was a psychiatrist who was serving as a Colonel on the Western Front. His mother was a registered nurse visiting hospitals throughout the Midwest, preparing them for a possible polio outbreak which authorities feared could demoralize the nation. She was also a psychiatric nurse for many years. After the war and at the conclusion of his father's psychiatric residency, the family moved to Richland, Washington, the Hanford Site of the Manhattan Project, an American-led effort to develop an atomic bomb. It employed many of America's top scientists and engineers and Richard's father was one of the few psychiatrists with the high-level security clearance required to minister to the mental health needs of those engaged in this top-secret work. The concentration of scientific expertise meant an excellent public schools and strong support for the creative learning and experimentation of young people. As the teenage Sutch told a reporter for *American Modeler*, "Because of the number of scientists in the area [the Richland Rocket Society was] able to obtain expert advice on almost any phase of science or

engineering.”¹ At the same time, Richland was a dangerous place to live. It produced plutonium, the dirtiest input into the manufacture of nuclear weapons. During Sutch’s youth, the Hanford Site expanded to include nine nuclear reactors and five large plutonium-processing plants. He would later learn that those plants released more than 200 million curies of radioactive debris into the surrounding water, air and soil — more than twice that released in Chernobyl.²

Sutch attended the University of Washington in Seattle, beginning as a physics major but quickly shifting into economics. His undergraduate advisor, Douglass North, directed his senior thesis on the economics of slavery and sparked what would become a life-long interest in economic history. It was also at the University of Washington that Sutch developed a love of cooking and entertaining. Living off-campus and facing a limited budget, he enrolled himself and his roommates in a USDA program designed to assist low-income households. Creatively converting his monthly allotment of beans, dried milk and cheese into chili, he hosted regular weekend parties for which the price of admission was beer, meat or vegetables, Sutch and his roommates lived well and made friends.

Sutch did his graduate work in economics at MIT, a leader in theoretical economic science. Under the direction of Franco Modigliani, Robert Solow, and Paul Samuelson, he worked on topics such as saving behavior, interest rates, and macroeconomic modeling. He helped pioneer the development of computer-based approaches to economic analysis and modeling including the Time Series Processor (TSP) statistical package and the MIT-PENN forecasting model. He nourished his love of economic history by taking graduate classes at Harvard under the direction of Alexander Gershenkron, meeting fellow students who would remain colleagues and friends for his entire life.

He joined the faculty at the University of California Berkeley in 1967 where he became a popular teacher of the introductory undergraduate course, Econ 1. He regularly taught over a thousand students at a time in the campus’s performance space, Zellerbach Auditorium, a number he believed to be the largest undergraduate class in the country outside of mandatory chapel at West Point. Long after he stopped teaching that he course he was regularly stopped by seeming strangers who remembered him as their Econ 1 professor and thanked him for a memorable experience. He received a courtesy appointment in Berkeley’s History Department in 1987 and one in the Demography Department in 1991. In addition to his teaching and research, Sutch served in a number of administrative posts including Dean of Special Curriculum, Chair of the Academic Senate, and Director of the Institute for Business and Economic

¹ Bertrand R. Brinley, “Nightfliers of the Northwest: Teen-Age Rocket Society Report,” *American Modeler*, Nov. 1959, p. 61.

² Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 3.

Research. In 1998 he left Berkeley to become Director of a new Center for Economic and Social Policy at UC Riverside, where he remained until his retirement in 2009.

In 1968 he married Susie Olive Speakman who uses the name Susie S. Sutch. They separated in 1995 and later divorced. He married Susan Boslego Carter in 1997. She survives him. In addition, he is survived by a daughter from his first marriage, Cordelia S. Nickelsen; two step-sons, Sean Michael Carter and Sasha Peter Carter; a sister, Sandra Batie; two grandsons and numerous nieces and nephews. A celebration of his life is planned for December. Please contact Susan Carter at susan.carter@ucr.edu for details. Contributions in Sutch's memory can be made to the Social Science History Association at <https://ssha.org/donate/>.