

*Inseparable: The Original Siamese Twins and Their Rendezvous with American History* by Yunte Huang

Available as a book through interlibrary loan.

I had never thought about why we say “Siamese twins,” but after reading this book, I know the origin. Much more than that, I learned the fascinating lives of the brothers Chang and Eng Bunker (1811-1874), conjoined at the sternum by a band of cartilage and with a mutual liver. “Discovered” in Siam by a British merchant in 1824, they were brought to Boston in 1829. Beginning as museum exhibits, they became financially knowledgeable and rose from freak-show celebrities to rich southern landowners. Later married to two white sisters, resulting in 21 children, the twins rose in success to eventually own slaves. Huang skillfully recreates the world of the brothers and gives us much to ponder about the nineteenth century history of the United States and its impact on attitudes that persisted to today.

by Debra Blunier