
Reviewed by Patricia Martinez, Assistant Professor of History, Valparaiso University.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the arrival of a new viceroy in colonial Mexico City was an event that prompted week-long celebrations that were primarily funded by the city; at least this was the case before Bourbon monarchs changed the role and scope of these celebrations in the eighteenth century. Linda Curcio-Nagy estimates that average citizens witnessed hundreds of these festivals in their lifetime. Colonial authorities during the Hapsburg era hoped that people would be awed and perhaps inspired by such spectacle, but the author also argues that city councilmen used them in a conscious way as a form of social control. It is this process of cultural hegemony that is the focus of this study. The author analyzes five of the largest festivals: the oath ceremony to a new monarch, the celebration of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Virgin of Remedies, and the Royal Banner festival. This work provides a comprehensive analysis of such celebrations but also thoughtfully explains how the relationship between the colonial government and society changed over time.

This is very readable cultural history, despite the fact that it deals with theoretically weighty topics. It could be used in the classroom to help students understand a variety of issues, such as the Spanish American colonization process, the relationship between the colonial government and society, and the difference between Hapsburg and Bourbon statecraft. The author succinctly presents her analysis in seven chapters. She clearly lays out her argument in the introduction and discusses “The Ideal Prince” in the second chapter. Here she notes that festivals in the period between 1585 and 1700 were grand and expensive affairs. The festivities that accompanied viceregal entries were an occasion to exalt the viceroy as the ideal Christian prince, yet city councilmen also used them as a forum to present an idealized version of the colonial government. Authorities spent much more time and energy celebrating viceregal entries than honoring the Spanish monarch in festivities. When colonial subjects became dissatisfied with government policies, they criticized the viceroy’s moral character and not the distant semidivine Spanish monarch. As such, celebrations placed great value on the viceroy’s personal virtues.

The following chapter addresses Native American and Afro-Mexican participation in the festivals. Although authorities incorporated different ethnic groups into the celebrations, it was done as a way to establish these groups’ subordinate status. In the fourth chapter, the author shows that Bourbon rulers had a much more utilitarian view of such festivals and were unwilling to fund these events. In fact, they expected citizens to subsidize them. Consequently, the primary supporters of and participants in future celebrations were wealthy Spaniards, most notably members of the silversmith guild. In addition, city
councilmen played a lesser role in developing such festivities, thus curtailing local influence.

Chapter six discusses satirical parades, poetry, sermons, and songs. Increasingly dissatisfied colonial subjects used such works to criticize their leaders. Authorities countered by banning satirical parades but could not quiet critics who expressed their opinions through anonymous poetry or song. The author thus concludes that the Bourbon plan “failed, and in the end, festivals could no longer deflect or contain the societal tensions, long present, that finally burst onto the political stage” in the nineteenth century (p. 154).

We can only imagine the extravagant nature of these festivities. Using primary sources such as city council minutes, illustrations, and first-hand descriptions, the author does an excellent job of reconstructing the parades and oath ceremonies. The explanations never become tedious. Unfortunately, she does not provide very extensive sample quotations of the satirical works that are discussed in chapter six. Both specialists and non-specialists would be interested in knowing exactly what these anonymous critics of the colonial government said. The author usually paraphrases these verses, and although her argument is not compromised by the exclusion of such works, we are still left to wonder about the content of these sermons, verses, and songs, especially because, as she points out, anonymous satire has often been “overlooked by historians” (p. 124).

Colonial scholars have noted for some time that Spain could not have maintained its colonies if they had simply relied on brute force. The continent was simply too vast and had too varied a population. The author effectively argues that celebrations and large-scale spectacle were another way in which Spanish American authorities could promote their agenda and thus, to an extent, also “control” their subjects. Bourbon authorities may not have understood the importance of such events, but after reading this book most will agree that festivals did play a significant role in shaping colonial society.


Reviewed by Jean A. Stuntz, Assistant Professor of History, Department of History and Geography, West Texas A&M University.

As Spain spread its empire northward from central Mexico, its administrators, missionaries, and military encountered diverse groups of Native Americans who reacted in various ways to Spanish attempts to assimilate them. As the essays in Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control on Spain’s North American Frontier skillfully demonstrate, different methods of attempted social control resulted in different outcomes in different sections of the northern frontier. The geographical scope is broad, including Florida, Louisiana, Sonora, and Saltillo. The subject matter is broad as well, looking at social controls exerted on all classes, from the king to the Indians.

The authors of these essays range from the eminent to the up-and-coming, but all are highly respected for their work. They gathered together under the auspices
of the Clements Center for Southwest Studies at Southern Methodist University and collaborated in unusual ways to produce this volume, which, as a result, is much more cohesive than is normal for a collection of essays. Each author in some way revises and redefines the accepted view of Spain’s role in North America. Every essay adds to the complexity of understanding of just what was happening in different areas of the Spanish Borderlands during a range of eras.

In the first essay, Alfredo Jiménez shows that even the king had to obey the law. Next, Jane Landers demonstrates how Spanish authorities attempted to control multi-ethnic and highly complex Florida for three centuries. Louisiana was also a mixture of diverse peoples, and this, as Gilbert C. Din shows, made it almost impossible for Spanish officials to achieve their goals. New Mexico has been the subject of much study, and Ross Frank adds to that literature with an examination of instructions left by Governor Concha to his successor concerning the resistance that his Hispanicized people might exhibit.

The next group of essays demonstrates a more “bottom-up” approach. Susan Deeds shows how some women used gender expectations and magic to achieve personal power within the system, thus subverting the social order. Cecilia Sheridan looks at how the Indians of northeastern New Spain adapted to the Spanish presence by changing tribal allegiances and personal identifications. Juliana Barr’s essay, “Beyond Their Control” illustrates just how much trouble the Spanish had dealing with the Native Americans in Texas.

The next three essays show that the Spanish in Northern Mexico faced the same problems they confronted in the Interior Provinces, although the outcomes were different. Cynthia Radding demonstrates, in her case study of colonial Sonora, that the very institutions that were supposed to control the population instead led to resistance to that control, especially by women. José Cuello adds to the scholarship concerning the system of castas with his essay on Saltillo. Patricia Osante looks at Nuevo Santander, and how a small group of highly motivated individuals shaped its fierce and often violent history. In the last essay, James Sandos looks at the mission-presidio system in California through the lenses of sexual scandal and Indian uprisings, both serious challenges to social control.

This volume not only contains high-level scholarship, but it is well written and accessible to educated readers. A basic understanding of Borderlands history is assumed, but there is a glossary of terms to help those unfamiliar with Spanish. Each author addresses race, class, or gender, sometimes all at once. This book is a must read for anyone studying the Spanish empire, or resistance to it, in North America.

Reviewed by Brian Isaac Daniels, Departments of Anthropology and History, University of Pennsylvania.

In a new social history of the California mission experience, Oregon State University historian Steven W. Hackel examines how California Indians weathered the transformation of their homelands after European colonization began in 1769. Through a detailed study of Mission San Carlos Borromeo, he asks how natives understood and lived through the “dual revolutions” of ecological change and demographic collapse. Hackel maintains that even while Indian populations declined and suffered abuses at the hands of the Franciscan missionaries and military authorities, a vibrant, affirming culture emerged among the neophytes at the missions.

The book is divided into three sections, each corresponding to a major theme in Hackel’s analysis. First, he begins with a conventional anthropological account of a timeless Native American past interrupted by the economically-driven Spanish voyages of discovery. Alta California was a virtual backwater of New Spain settled by Franciscan missionaries who held little knowledge of the colonial enterprise. The plants, animals, and pathogens that they brought, however, radically changed the California landscape. Disease ripped native communities apart. Environmental degradation caused by the unchecked proliferation of domesticated animals led to a chronic food shortage. By intertwining the twin problems of community disintegration and starvation, Hackel provides a plausible explanation as to why Indians would voluntarily come to the oppressive missions. The “awful genius” of Spanish colonization coupled a subsistence crisis with a solution in the form of mission-distributed food (p. 72). It was those people most susceptible to change -- the very young, the old, and unmarried women -- who initially came to the missions and remade their communities.

Once Hackel defines the scope of California missionization in terms of sustenance and community support, he turns to his second theme of Franciscan reform. Missionaries intended to alter radically Indian understandings of their world through a “civilizing process” of religious indoctrination, sexual reform, select political appointment, and corporal punishment. In each domain, Indians countered their oppressors through overt and covert resistance but ultimately found themselves enmeshed within an all-encompassing colonial experience. Finally, in a single chapter too brief for the complexity and depth of his research, Hackel turns to the 1826 emancipation of California Indians after which they moved from the yoke of missionary drudgery to vaquero ranch labor under a Mexican regime.

Hackel’s major conclusion is that while Native American populations in coastal California declined drastically, they nevertheless integrated into the hierarchical missionary system. Indian communities reshaped themselves around the daily
practices of mission life. Especially transformative were the roles of the *alcalde*, *fiscal*, and *regidor*, who were all Indian officials in the missions, elected in principle by the Indians themselves, but usually appointed by the priests. By incorporating existing Indian class hierarchies into this overseer system, the missionaries ensured the cooperation of entire villages. The positions also, ironically, reinforced community solidarity and provided a measure of experience for those who held them in dealing with the political realities of a successively Spanish, Mexican, and, after 1850, American cultural milieu.

This detailed social history emerges out of Hackel’s extraordinary command of colonial primary source materials. The pages of the book brim with individual accounts of personal tragedy and careful negotiation within the hierarchies of Mission San Carlos. When local contextual information from Monterey is lacking, Hackel augments his history with equally compelling examples from other California missions. Further supporting Hackel’s claims is a detailed demographic analysis of the California mission system. Drawing upon the work of anthropologist Randall Milliken, Hackel employs missionary baptismal, marriage, and death records as ethnographic sources for population reconstruction. While Hackel asserts that the techniques that undergird the reconstitution of families from missionary records are standard statistics carried out by the Centre Roland Mousnier, Université Paris IV-Sorbonne, we are not given a glimpse of the methodology by which the categories of information are determined. This oversight is unfortunate indeed because the coupling of rich textual detail and demographic analysis makes this book a landmark study from which all future work about California missionization must begin.

*Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis* is a challenging book on many fronts and raises a number of important questions about California missionization. Foremost is the issue of how tribal affiliation emerged out of the mission experience. Before their encounter with the Franciscans, did the “children of coyote” -- a phrase appropriated from a Rumsen origin myth -- in fact share a group identity the way Hackel’s title (and frequent reuse of the descriptor throughout the book) imply? Did organized resistance in the missions -- a topic only touched upon throughout the book -- reinforce a sense of belonging? In what ways did the experience of forced Catholicism bind or fragment Indian communities after secularization? Like all good histories, this book opens new possibilities for future scholarship. Hackel’s lasting achievement and service is to provide a thoroughgoing reference point for students of California missionization and the colonial history of the Americas.

Reviewed by Timothy G. Lynch, Assistant Professor of Maritime History, Department of Global and Maritime Studies, California Maritime Academy, California State University.

The Journal of a Sea Captain’s Wife, 1841-1845 offers an intriguing look at the world of merchant shipping in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. As the only known journal kept by the wife of a ship captain during a voyage along the Pacific Coast prior to 1848, this slim volume is unique; while wives of sea captains occasionally accompanied their husbands on Pacific voyages, few recorded their experiences. Indeed, this may be the only known journal kept by an American hide and tallow sea captain’s wife while voyaging along the Pacific Coast in the first half of the nineteenth century. As such, this account offers a fascinating perspective on this period. The journals also capture the period with a subtlety rare in such accounts.

The book records the experiences of Lydia Nye, wife of captain Gorham Nye, as she rounded Cape Horn in 1842. Nye departs from New England aboard a passenger ship with the hope of meeting her seafaring husband in Honolulu. To amuse herself and inform her family, Nye kept a journal of her Pacific odyssey, a portion of which was in the form of a family letter. The first part of the book, then, recounts Nye’s experiences at sea, replete with humorous anecdotes and near tragic events. After completing the perilous four-month journey, Nye takes up residence in Hawaii, where her journal records daily life among American missionaries living in Honolulu and their interactions with native Hawaiians. Nye’s journal affords a close look at power struggles between the natives and European newcomers (recounting an attempted annexation by British interests) and between Christian missionaries and their flock. Nye’s work therefore serves as an eyewitness account of intercultural contact and conflict in the Pacific Basin during a period of profound social and political ferment.

Reunited in Honolulu, Lydia and Gorham Nye decide to continue their Pacific peregrinations together. The Journal recounts the Nyes’ experiences as they traverse the Eastern Pacific, trading with natives in the Pacific Northwest “some of whom appear as though they were capable of acquiring knowledge” (p. 129), Spaniards in San Francisco (depicted as woefully intolerant of non-Catholics), and others along the California Coast. The middle part of Nye’s Journal reflects the importance of the California hide trade, reveals growing American-Mexican animosity, and offers a glimpse into the lives of wealthy rancheros. Eventually the couple returns to Hawaii, where Lydia gives birth to a daughter. From there, it is back to the East Coast. The latter part of Nye’s volume reveals an increasingly fractured family, struggling to survive in the wake of a changing economy.

Nye’s journal — ably edited and placed in its proper context by Doyce Nunis, who provides insightful commentary via extensive, if distracting, footnotes and an excellent prologue — is important on several levels. Journal of a Sea Captain’s Wife is an able complement to Richard Henry Dana’s Two Years Before the Mast. It provides a needed corollary to the standard interpretation of antebellum American
seafaring in the Pacific. It lends historical support to the heretofore anecdotal experiences of early American women seafarers. In so doing, it adds a new level of complexity to the concept of Victorian womanhood. Nye certainly fits the mold of obedient maiden to her husband. Writing to her mother to announce her reunion with Gorham, she says “Congratulate me, for I am in the presence of that dear one for whom I have crossed the stormy ocean” (p. 117), but she also flouts convention: she reveals a tough resolve, political acumen, and lack of cultural sensitivity that more closely reflected traditional male worldviews of that time. *Journal of a Sea Captain’s Wife* is a fascinating, first-person look at a topic that is only recently being seriously studied. The journal should find a wide readership and scholars will want to expand further upon the subjects raised.


Reviewed by Renee Laegreid, Assistant Professor of History, Hastings College.

*Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the Way West* tackles the assumption that the ability to move freely across the West historically belonged to men. Virginia Scharff argues, “Women’s movements preceded, configured, and survived the West,” yet their movements have been kept out of sight by “historical maps…[that] have generally been drawn by, for, and about men” (p. 4). Scharff puts women back into the historical map through a series of representative biographies, reminding readers that women have always been a part of the West, and that the roads they traveled affected both genders, regionally and nationally.

The book is organized into three chronological parts. The first focuses on two women who traveled “terrain not yet part of the American West” (p. 4). This section is superb. The familiar tale of Sacagawea shows how Lewis and Clark did not “see” women. By looking around the edges of their written evidence, however, a story emerges of Native American women respected for their ability to move easily across the landscape. Susan Magoffin’s diary, stripped of its earlier interpretations, becomes a vehicle for understanding the cultural challenges faced by a young, white, officer’s wife traveling across the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico.

Part two focuses on the post-Civil War era of territorial expansion when the importance of the West, in terms of empire building, affected profoundly the national consciousness. A solid essay on the political history of Wyoming’s fight for women’s suffrage sets the stage for Grace Raymond Hebard’s biography. For Scharff, she represents the emergence of college-educated women who chose careers rather than domesticity and “enjoyed a freedom to move independently not available to most wives and mothers” (p. 95). This self-proclaimed feminist’s remarkable academic and political accomplishments not only helped shape Wyoming’s regional identity, but provided opportunities for other women to move beyond the domestic sphere. The essay on Fabiola Cabeza de Baca tells the story of a well-educated, elite woman’s efforts during the early twentieth century to shape New Mexico’s future by preserving its Hispanic cultural past.

The concluding part expands beyond the West as place, showing how the
Western idea of unrestricted mobility influenced a number of women during
the second half of the twentieth century. She looks at civil rights activist Jo Ann
Robinson, a black teacher in the South, who took part in the 1955 Atlanta bus
strikes. Also included is rock groupie and author Pamela Des Barres who traverses
an uncharted terrain of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Finally, Scharff draws on
her own experiences as a housewife in the Highlands Ranch suburb. Here the
pioneer's dream of privacy, independence, and a view of unspoiled wilderness
from one's own ranch house continues, albeit with some modifications. Now
the house is squeezed in amidst thousands of others just like it, and the western
dream requires "perpetual movement" from women as they travel the highways to
shopping malls, schools, stores, and soccer fields (p. 186).

This book does not try to tell the story of all women who lived in or were
influenced by the idea of the West. The dark side of Western mobility, where
women reluctantly followed a spouse across the frontier or where economic
necessity forced repeated relocations, receives only cursory mention. Rather,
this is a book about middle-class or privileged women, active in major historical
events, who embraced the possibilities of movement -- geographically, culturally,
politically, or professionally -- that the idea of the West inspired. Writing in an
engaging, often witty, and accessible manner, Scharff reminds readers that women
have always been on the historical map, playing a key role in creating what we
know as the West, as they continue to do today.

*Louis Rose: San Diego’s First Jewish Settler and Entrepreneur.* By Donald H.
index and notes. 284 pp. $19.95 paper.

Reviewed by William Toll, Adjunct Professor, History Department, University
of Oregon.

In this book, Donald H. Harrison, a prominent San Diego journalist, describes
the life and times of Louis Rose and the early San Diego that his business ventures
helped nurture. As such, the book provides a San Diego equivalent of Harris
Newmark’s *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913* (published in 1916) that
provided extensive detail on the merchants -- non-Jews as well as Jews -- who built
nineteenth-century Los Angeles. Louis Rose was born in 1807 in a small Hanover
town. He may have been trained by his father (who died in 1837) to make jewelry,
but very little is known about him until his decision in 1840, at age 33, to come to
America. Instead of landing in New York like most Germans and most Jews, he
went to New Orleans, where he may have joined cousins. The author provides
some data derived largely from public records on Rose’s life in New Orleans,
including his brief marriage in 1847 to Caroline Marks and his mounting debts. In
1848 he left New Orleans alone for San Antonio, and in 1849 the Gold Rush lured
him west. Again unlike most Jewish adventurers, he came overland rather than
by ship, and he settled in remote San Diego, not in San Francisco or the gold fields.
Thomas B. Eastland’s letters and diary provide a vivid picture of the wagon train
from San Antonio to El Paso, though Rose is only mentioned once. In El Paso, Rose
made an important friend, James Robinson, who was also heading west with his
wife and son. Robinson, nine years older than Rose and experienced in resolving
disputes over Spanish land claims, became Rose’s mentor. The two undertook similar land speculation in San Diego until Robinson’s death in 1857. Despite his debts in New Orleans, Rose arrived in San Diego with funds to invest, though Harrison cannot identify the source. Rose ran a boarding house, bought a butcher shop, started a tannery, invested in coal mines, and joined the Masonic lodge. With his earnings he speculated in town lots, including a large plot on San Diego Bay, which he called Roseville, as well as rural acreage. After having no communication with his wife for four years, he wrote to a relative in New Orleans to invite her to join him. She refused, and he legally divorced her in 1853 on grounds of adultery. He did not remarry until 1869, when at age 62 he married Mathilde Newman, the 33 year-old widow of a fellow Jewish merchant. They had two children, one of whom survived the diseases of childhood.

As Rose’s net worth increased, he was elected to the various permutations of the town’s city council, and he became a prominent civic booster. He became integrally involved in “developing” San Diego as a port and especially as the possible terminus of a trans-continental railroad. He also made a lot of money buying and selling real estate. But the boom and bust cycle of late nineteenth-century America caught up with him. During the 1870s, his failed railroad investments left him with diminished net worth, while the frequent outbreak of diseases left him again a widower. He died in 1888 and was survived by one daughter, whose oral history provides some of the information for reconstructing Rose’s meager family life.

Too often, however, Harrison uses Rose as an opportunity to list interminable real estate transactions and election results, whose significance, if any, is left for the reader to infer. And the ostensible subject of the book, Louis Rose, disappears in a welter of undigested data. Harrison identifies moments when Rose’s life intersected with the small Jewish community: giving land for a cemetery and providing space for a religious service. But Rose generally kept his distance. Harrison, unfortunately, never sketches in a coherent picture the size or evolving organization of the Jewish community, or its relationship to the larger Jewish communities in San Francisco or Los Angeles. Even more discouraging, Harrison does not try to set Rose into the army of Jewish merchants throughout the American West who were also building communities.

Having come to the West at least twenty years older than most Jewish adventurers, with no family life until he reached his sixties, and remaining in a city that was not on the main trade route, Rose remained marginal to the experience of his Jewish male contemporaries. Throughout the West, Jewish merchants such as Rose had intimate business dealings with non-Jews, but were generally anchored in a network of Hebrew Benevolent Societies and chevra for religious activities. Rose seems not to have been. A comparison of Rose’s career with those of Jewish merchants elsewhere--Bernard Goldsmith in Portland, Mike Goldwater in Arizona Territory, Bailey Gatzert in Seattle, the Weinstocks and Lubins in Sacramento, for example--might have better set his life into the Western Jewish experience and provided the reader with a broader interpretive context.

Reviewed by James T. Carroll, Associate Professor of History, Iona College.

Norman E. Tutorow’s comprehensive and lengthy biography of Leland Stanford provides both scholars and interested parties with an account that touches upon virtually every event that shaped the life and legacy of this influential man. The Governor is an old-fashioned and traditional biography that tells the life of Stanford starting from birth, pausing at major developments and points of transition, and closing with a lengthy review of his legacy. It is quite clear that Tutorow places Leland Stanford on a historic pedestal and believes that he is the major force behind the social, political, and economic developments of the State of California. While not quite warranting charges of hagiography, Tutorow, at times, fails to address Stanford’s shortcomings, particularly the graft and chicanery associated with the construction and completion of the transcontinental railroad. Despite this criticism, it is important to note the important contributions of this narrative.

Tutorow’s exhaustive and far-reaching use of primary sources, ranging from those located at the Stanford University Archives to the paper remnants of long-forgotten railroads, provides a broad spectrum of sources for scholars interested in California, business history, politics in the American West, and the transcontinental railroad. Moreover, the narrative adds to our understanding of many of those associated with the early history of California and the emergence of transcontinental transportation. Tutorow’s lively and engaging portrayal of these men highlights the gender-specific character of California in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is important, however, to understand that these thoughtful asides are only intended to embody the hero of this narrative: Leland Stanford. Tutorow dubs Stanford a “California Colossus” -- a designation well earned by this remarkable man. Stanford’s intimate association with the growth of California started with the gold rush and ended with his death in 1893, as the nation faced a major economic crisis.

In slightly over forty years Stanford pursued various business enterprises that contributed to the economic vibrancy of the state, entered the political arena at the state and national level, represented the interests of Californians, and established a number of institutions--notably Stanford University--that contributed to the intellectual prestige of the state. Regardless of his role (prospector, businessman, unsuccessful political contender, state governor, railroad entrepreneur, U.S. senator, or founder of a university), Leland Stanford was pivotal in the development of California, and Norman Tutorow is to be commended for uncovering and reporting the varied contributions of this complex individual.

The Governor is not for those seeking a critical analysis of Leland Stanford. Nevertheless, Tutorow provides an important encyclopedic source for those interested in the life and legacy of Stanford and political and economic developments in nineteenth-century California. As such, The Governor makes a solid contribution to the history of the nineteenth-century American West.
If you think there is nothing to learn about the famous Hetch Hetchy debate, this book is for you. Prominent in every environmental history reader, the early twentieth-century debate over the construction of a dam in the beautiful Yosemite National Park is usually depicted as the seminal battle between Progressive Era preservationists and wise-use conservationists. The Sierra Club’s John Muir usually plays prominently in the tale, invariably the noble champion of the natural world, a man before his time thwarted by San Francisco’s insatiable demand for fresh water. It is a familiar story to every student of environmental history, but one that Robert Righter now tells us is not fully understood. Righter, a professor at Southern Methodist University, delves deeper and broader into the struggle and its long aftermath. The result is this excellent text - and a new, more nuanced version of an old story.

The story of Hetch Hetchy is much more complex, Righter argues. The fight over the dam was never really about wilderness but public power, in particular the larger debate over private utility versus municipal ownership. Many California progressives argued in favor of San Francisco, afraid that the alternative was higher rates from the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Lumped together with what many viewed as a greedy corporate colossus, Muir never had a chance. Despite his best efforts, Congress passed the Raker Act in 1913 awarding the city the dam. It was, most assumed, a victory for the public interest.

Unlike some authors, Righter recognizes that the Raker Act was only the beginning of the story. Progressive faith in expertise allowed the engineers to build a system that provided more water than the city needed, but at a cost that the city could not afford. In the end, the municipality continued to struggle with private interests. The resulting construction, Righter reminds us, was impressive but unfortunate. Alternative routes would have sufficed at less cost in terms of both money and land use. Unlike so many other books, here nothing appears simple. The city advocates were correct that the city needed water; the city had, after all, recently burned following its famous 1906 earthquake. Muir was correct in the need for preservation; the valley was truly unique. It was a story of missed opportunities as much as good versus evil.

The interplay of personalities makes Righter’s work enjoyable. Gifford Pinchot, for one, is usually depicted as a victor, his advocacy for San Francisco successful. Righter explains, however, that the Forest Service chief desperately wanted the national parks under his purview. But his “stubbornness” (p. 195) in advocating for the city inadvertently made him powerful enemies that blocked his ambition. John Muir emerges, as usual, in a positive light, although many readers may find it surprising that he never anticipated that the valley would remain pristine. Righter concludes in the final chapters that the story of Hetch Hetchy is more complex than usually acknowledged, that the legacy of the fight is long, and the story is far from over. Proposals to restore the valley are growing, promising yet new chapters in
the ongoing tale. Restoration, Righter leaves the reader hoping in the end, promises redemption.

Righter treats his cast of characters fairly, and he even includes, in essence, a playbill at the outset for quick reference. His research and citations are excellent, but he never lets the scholarly nature of his work overly burden the narrative. The book is an easy read. The importance of the Hetch Hetchy debate will undoubtedly spawn new books, although after Righter’s work I see no reason why.


Reviewed by Matthew Bokovoy, Acquisitions Editor, University of Oklahoma Press.

In 1907, Joseph P. Widney, booster, physician, and former University of Southern California president, wrote that in Los Angeles “the Captains of Industry are the truest captains of the race war” (pg. 7). In so doing, he placed the fledgling west coast city as the world epicenter of Aryan supremacy. For civic promoters, Los Angeles stood as a redeemer metropolis, especially in contrast to other U.S. cities apparently overrun with African Americans, southeastern Europeans, and Asian immigrants. These boosters created a national, eugenic brand for Los Angeles: a city bathed in sunlight and steeped in the cult of vitality, a city that offered restoration of the white body politic under threat of “racial amalgamation” and race suicide. Los Angeles eventually emerged in the minds of many Americans as a healthy alternative to modern, urban chaos and ethnic diversity of cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and South. But in order to achieve this feat, L.A. leaders from the infamous, vigilante-style Chamber of Commerce found it necessary to remove and isolate its large ethnic Mexican population, even as industrial L.A. required the labor of ethnic Mexicans to build the Aryan future. At the same time, the city recast the locale’s Spanish history and heritage to establish European roots for the city.

In his thought-provoking examination of the intertwined history of racial discrimination and heritage promotion in Los Angeles, William Deverell charts the rise of the city, from dusty Mexican settlement to isolated Anglo town and then on to major industrial metropolis. Deverell believes the transformation of Los Angeles rested on two major racial conceits: first L.A. rose to prominence “by covering up places, people, and histories that those in power found unsettling,” and second, the city “became a self-conscious ‘City of the Future’ by whitewashing an adobe past, even an adobe present and adobe future” (pp. 7-8). In his view, “Los Angeles came of age amidst (and in part because of) specific responses to Mexican ethnicity and Mexican spaces,” making it imperative to understand “the complex and disturbing relationship between whites, especially those able to command various forms of power, and Mexican people, a Mexican past, and a Mexican landscape” (p. 6).

In six chapters, Deverell excavates major episodes in the social and political construction of the “Mexican problem” and “Spanish fantasy heritage.” In doing so, the author offers a rich, archival-based tapestry that shows the depth of institutionalized racial discrimination against ethnic Mexicans, even as L.A.
boosters larded their promotional appeals with Spanish romance. He captures the racial violence of late nineteenth-century Los Angeles, when the city rose as a tourist destination and market for real estate speculation. He shows the quandary faced by the Chamber of Commerce during and after the Spanish American War, as it promoted Spanish fantasy heritage through the Fiesta de Los Angeles. He reveals that Progressive Era and New Deal public policy meant to control the L.A. River assured the city’s sunny image through increased spatial segregation of the city’s ethnic Mexicans. Deverell tells the saga of the Simons Brick Company in Montebello. It emerged as the largest brickyard in the world, and its bricks built much of Los Angeles, but it did so by creating a Mexicanized version of Pullman, Illinois, complete with paternalistic labor control and substandard living conditions. The final two chapters especially sparkle and resonate. The author links structural racial discrimination and cultural myth making by juxtaposing the bubonic plague epidemic of 1924 that swept through L.A.’s Mexican district and John Steven McGroarty’s *The Mission Play* (one of the most popular pageants of the 1920s). As word of the plague reached outside Southern California, the L.A. City Council and Chamber of Commerce worried about commercial losses to the city and ordered an “ethnic quarantine.” In so doing, they equated ethnicity with a diseased and blighted urban landscape. Three years later, in an effort to prop up the ailing pre-Depression fortunes of the city, the Chamber of Commerce took control of *The Mission Play*, which dramatized a romantic Spanish tradition for Los Angeles with no connection to actual history.

In the tradition of Southern California’s two greatest critics, Carey McWilliams and Mike Davis, Deverell hopes *Whitewashed Adobe* will help Los Angeleses come to terms with racist historical patterns so that we might deviate from them in the future and forge “a city true to a different Southern California future” (p. 6). Although this is a worthy endeavor, it also presents problems. The radical, social democratic possibilities of marrying social justice movements to expressions of public heritage do not preoccupy Deverell, as they did McWilliams in *North From Mexico* (1949) and Davis in *City of Quartz* (1990). Interracial social movements emerged from cooperation between ethnic-based labor activist and socialist intellectual circles during the period 1880-1940, coalescing with the Los Angeles Popular Front of the 1940s, led by figures like Robert Kenney, McWilliams, Josephina Fierro de Bright, and Luisa Moreno.

William Deverell’s *Whitewashed Adobe* is bold in scope and engaging in its conclusions. As a work of cultural history, it will live as a classic work in the wider field of American history, surpassing works on cities that consider only white and African American ethnicity and race relations. The book is well illustrated and contains three useful maps. Well-written, *Whitewashed Adobe* will appeal to both scholars and lay readers interested in the racial politics of the Southern California past.

Reviewed by Volker Janssen, Assistant Professor of History, California State University, Fullerton.

Prisons are what people make of them. This “power of people to make institutions” (p. xiv), John C. Burnham and Joseph F. Spillane contend, is the central message of Prison Work. Most scholarship thus far has tended to focus on the prisons that reformers made, or the worlds that resilient prisoners built. Guards have rarely occupied center stage for historians. The editors thus deserve credit for introducing us to this memoir of William Richard Wilkinson, who spent 30 years as a correctional officer in California’s prisons. As concerns about the human and fiscal costs of mass incarceration grow daily, the “wisdom concerning how to handle convicts” that Spillane and Burnham promise on the back cover should be in high demand indeed.

An advocate of rehabilitation, Wilkinson started out at Chino prison under famous penologist Kenyon Scudder, who insisted on a prison without walls as the only path to successful rehabilitation. Frowning at the mere warehousing at conventional prisons, Wilkinson fondly recalls the productive atmosphere in Chino’s vocational shops and the farm. His memories of undermining the bravado of an uncooperative 245 pound prisoner by assigning him a guard half his size, and of the time the Muslim Brotherhood issued him a letter for safe passage raise the hope that therapeutic rehabilitation in postwar California indeed relied on wit, not violence (p. 67).

Other anecdotes, however, quickly quell the reader’s optimism. Lightheartedly, Wilkinson tells the story of subduing a prisoner by “hold[ing] him down and tear[ing] the clothes off him,” to “march him up the main hall of the institution naked” (p. 11). In the wake of Abu Ghraib, most readers will probably fail to see the “wisdom” in this technique. And while no friend of senseless violence, Wilkinson nonetheless appreciated the power of terror and intimidation. “If you ever raise your fist to one of my correctional officers again,” he recalls threatening a prisoner, “I will go back to the old way of doing things and probably break your legs” (p. 144). This “worked like a charm,” he concludes.

Wilkinson’s happy days were the 1950s, when guards still enjoyed authority “next to Superman” (p. 23). But when liberal prison administrators opened the prison to outside influences, the guards’ world fell apart. “It ganged up on us: all the television sets, all the civilian clothes, all the telephones, all the banquets, all the radios, all the non-censoring of mail” (p. 100). Prisoners’ civil and human rights undermined the guards’ authority. “[T]his emancipation thing,” Wilkinson complains, even denied him the right to “control inmates by making their lives miserable” (pp. 102, 75). The court-ordered renovation of Soledad’s old isolation unit, for example, prevented guards from denying prisoners water and basic hygiene. “[W]e had to tear the cells up and put plumbing in all of them. It ruined perfectly good lock up cells” (p. 150). Prisoners simply had “too much freedom,” such as conjugal visits, which were meant to keep prisoners’ families together, but
which Wilkinson decried as “outlandish” and “absolutely asinine” (pp. 109-111). There is little “wisdom” in Prison Work, but much anger and resentment.

Surprisingly, Wilkinson was one of the more moderate guards. He strictly rejected the militancy of the emerging prison guards’ union, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association. Although openly sexist, he was more accommodating to women in the workplace than others. He resented the department’s affirmative action policies towards minorities as much as those towards women. But he also acknowledged the open discrimination his nonwhite colleagues suffered in small town prison communities.

Wilkinson’s recollections permit a wide range of observations about the nature of the rehabilitative regime in the postwar welfare state. The problem with Prison Work is that Burnham and Spillane do not actually offer any such interpretations. Instead, the editors insist on the integrity of their subject’s memoir and offer this account only to “stimulate further research and investigation.” They provide fifteen introductory pages with some background on the California Department of Corrections and a brief historiography. Their footnotes offer little more than clarifications of fact. However genuinely modest this restraint may be, it also makes Prison Work less a work of history than the raw material for future scholarship. Sources simply do not speak for themselves, and the editors’ silence on the many historical questions raised by Wilkinson limits the import of this work. Still, historians ought to be grateful for such candid and unrestrained shoptalk. Unwittingly, this memoir suggestively points to the ways in which white working class resentment emerged out of the very structures of the postwar liberal state of which California’s Department of Corrections was an integral part.