



The Dream Endures

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Kevin Starr is the author of *AMERICANS AND THE CALIFORNIA DREAM, 1850-1915* (1973), *INVENTING THE DREAM: CALIFORNIA THROUGH THE PROGRESSIVE ERA* (1985), *MATERIAL DREAMS: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA THROUGH THE 1920'S* (1990), and *ENDANGERED DREAMS: THE GREAT DEPRESSION IN CALIFORNIA* (1996). His latest work in this series, *THE DREAM ENDURES: CALIFORNIA ENTERS THE 1940S*, is graced with his customary command of social and cultural history, but the subtitle is slightly misleading. Except for his chapter on the European emigres who came to Los Angeles in the 1930's, there is little sense of the state actually entering the 1940's. Rather, each chapter backs up the book to (usually) the turn of the century and shows how California turned itself into a modern state. The material is engrossing. Starr maintains reader interest by studding his narrative with many mini-biographies, showing how individual careers dovetail with the dream of California as not only a land of individual promise but a site of scholarly, intellectual, scientific, and artistic creativity.

THE DREAM ENDURES contains thirteen large chapters, with each one getting a succinct summary in Starr's table of contents. He ranges from coastal California—Berkeley and Carmel—to San Francisco to San Diego to Los Angeles. He is especially good on Hollywood, its welcoming of emigres in the 1930's, and its contribution not only to the California dream but to the American mythos as well. He is as good on California's contribution to science, particularly to the development of astronomy in Pasadena. He is delightful on folkways—on how barbecue became such an important feature of California cuisine, for example.

Starr's major strength is his ability to select telling examples. His narrative never degenerates into a catalogue. Although he is presenting largely a factual, objective account, it is obvious that he identifies with the California dream. *THE DREAM ENDURES* is a history built on a density of detail that would destroy the readability of most books. Yet its array of colorful personalities, anecdotes, accounts of how institutions get built and reputations founded, is the equivalent of watching California grow. It is a great—and as Starr insists—an enduring story.

Sources for Further Study

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