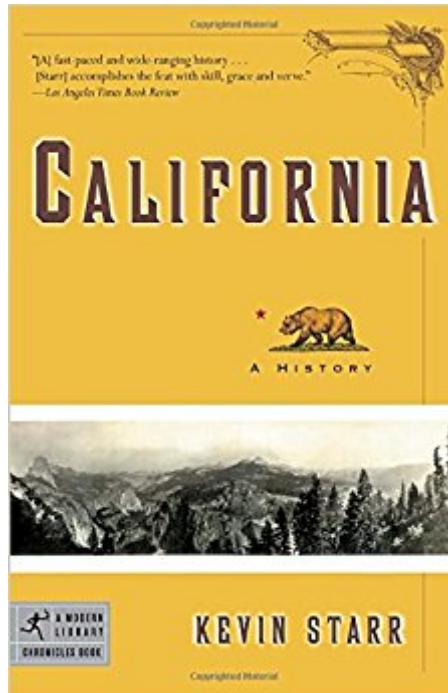




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# California: A History (Modern Library Chronicles)



## Synopsis

California has always been our Shangri-la—the promised land of countless pilgrims in search of the American Dream. Now the Golden State’s premier historian, Kevin Starr, distills the entire sweep of California’s history into one splendid volume. From the age of exploration to the age of Arnold, this is the story of a place at once quintessentially American and utterly unique. Arguing that America’s most populous state has always been blessed with both spectacular natural beauty and astonishing human diversity, Starr unfolds a rapid-fire epic of discovery, innovation, catastrophe, and triumph. For generations, California’s native peoples basked in the abundance of a climate and topography eminently suited to human habitation. By the time the Spanish arrived in the early sixteenth century, there were scores of autonomous tribes thriving in the region. Though conquest was rapid, nearly two centuries passed before Spain exerted control over upper California through the chain of missions that stand to this day. The discovery of gold in January 1848 changed everything. With population increasing exponentially as get-rich-quick dreamers converged from all over the world, California reinvented itself overnight. Starr deftly traces the successive waves of innovation and calamity that have broken over the state since then—the incredible wealth of the Big Four railroad tycoons and the devastating San Francisco earthquake of 1906; the emergence of Hollywood as the world’s entertainment capital and of Silicon Valley as the center of high-tech research and development; the heroic irrigation and transportation projects that have altered the face of the region; the role of labor, both organized and migrant, in key industries from agriculture to aerospace. Kevin Starr has devoted his career to the history of his beloved state, but he has never lost his sense of wonder over California’s sheer abundance and peerless variety. This one-volume distillation of a lifetime’s work gathers together everything that is most important, most fascinating, and most revealing about our greatest state. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 2004, California had a population of 36 million and the fifth-largest economy in the world. Starr, USC professor and former California state librarian, has justification for referring to his state as "this nation state, this world commonwealth." His distillation of his previously written seven-volume series, *California and the American Dream*, is a single-volume tour de force that is superbly researched and beautifully written. This straight, chronological history opens with a fascinating survey of the geology, climate, flora, and fauna of the region, and then the author provides interesting insights into the achievements and failings of Spanish and Mexican governance, while he pays particular attention to the sad fate of California's indigenous peoples. Most of the book covers the period of American supremacy, and Starr's treatment of topics such as the gold rush, the growth of high-tech industries, and the emergence of California as the center of the motion-picture industry is handled with great aplomb. For both general readers and those with a particular interest in regional history, this is an informative and enjoyable reading experience. Jay Freeman

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"Kevin Starr is one of California's greatest historians, and *California: A History* is an invaluable contribution to our state's record and lore." —Maria Shriver, First Lady of California

"From Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo to Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Donner Party to the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Kevin Starr captures the fullness of California history in one sweeping and masterful narrative. Starr is not only the Golden State's greatest living chronicler, he is also one of its greatest treasures." —Gregory Rodríguez, senior fellow, New America Foundation, and contributing editor, *Los Angeles Times*

"I am honored to recommend *California: A History*, this perfect distillation of Kevin Starr's life's work. He is California's most devoted lover and most passionate advocate,

our patron saint. He transforms an already fascinating tale and imbues it with ineffable magic and grace. — Carolyn See, author of *Making a Literary Life* — “There is no more knowledgeable or insightful historian of the California dream than Kevin Starr. — Richard Rodriguez — “A magisterially authoritative survey of the movements — geological, political, scientific, artistic, and sociological — that have shaped California into the unique state it is today. This engrossing warts-and-all saga is told with a verve and panache that sweep the reader along. — Michael York

From the Hardcover edition.

If you are embarking on a journey to understand California, I would begin with this book. Sure, if this was meant to be a comprehensive history of California, it would be 1000s of pages long; however, it does provide certain episodes, and names in California history which gives the reader a starting point to explore further after this book. Highly recommend, especially to provide as a starting point to explore more in detail.

Pure Kevin Starr, so fans for his will love it. Short, easy read. Good introduction to his longer books. However, even though he knows absolutely every fact related to California, Starr is very short on analysis or synthesis. The book therefore reads like a collection of facts - kind of like going through your grandmother's attic. I love California and Starr is our historian of record, but ...

I just finished this book and really enjoyed its rollercoaster ride through California history. Starr has a good sense of how to contextualize topics that helps one see California from many views. As an example, he takes California's labor and union history starting with its earliest days up to near modern times, all in a swoop, but in a way that helps one better understand both labor and union and California. He does similar journeys for other topics like California art and literature. Sometimes California can be such a grand topic that it is hard to grasp its true shape and contours. Starr does an excellent job of giving one person's summary of it, and helps to make the subject more easily graspable. It may not be for everyone, but I recommend Starr's California

As a native Californian, raised there when schools still taught history, I enjoyed the book, and learned a lot.

great read by a great author.

Bought it for school. Much cheaper than new and it was in great condition

Being new to California, I needed to have some background history about the State. The book is well documented and very thorough, also very pleasant to read. I enjoyed it immensely. It has helped me to acquire a better understanding of its multi-cultural roots and how it has developed through time.

Outstanding very readable history of California. I really enjoyed it and I learned a great deal. I give it a huge thumbs up!

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