LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL
The Branding Iron
J. GOODMAN

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Ernest Dawson and His Wonderful Book Shop: A Reminiscence

by Anna Marie Hager

The staff at Dawson's Book Shop—1940. *Photo courtesy, Dawson's Book Shop*

My life became involved in the adventurous world of books in Dawson's Book Shop.

An invitation from Ernest Dawson to Miss Dorothy Drake (later to become head librarian for Scripp's Women's College) for her students in library science to come and visit the book shop was the beginning. Unable to be with the group of fledgling library students on the day selected, Miss Drake gave me a letter of introduction to Mr. Dawson so that I might

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The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL

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THE BRANDING IRON solicits aritcles of 1,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

JULY

John Haskell Kemble, professor emeritus at Pomona College, described San Pedro Harbor from its beginnings in the early 19th century to modern times. Despite its geographical disadvantages, San Pedro offered a location for bringing together the hides and tallow of the Californio settlers and the manufactured goods of the Yankee traders. With the American period beginning in 1848, coastwise transportation increased. A regular steamship line established in 1849 saw San Pedro as one of the stops on the coast. Agitation began in the 1870s for improved harbor facilities. Various seacoast areas argued for the location of an improved harbor at their own spot. San Pedro made some improvements allowing moderate size vessels to reach Wilmington docks.

During the 1890s San Pedro and Santa Monica were involved in a great struggle over federal appropriations for harbor improvement. This rivalry became known as the "free harbor" contest, with the Southern Pacific unsuccessfully supporting Santa Monica against Los Angeles' backing of San Pedro. Completion of the breakwater and improvements in the harbor and river channels meant that Los Angeles, along with long Beach, would enjoy increased business in shipping and shipbuilding. In the 1920s the Los Angeles Steamship Company, backed by Los Angeles businessmen, was moderately successful; the Matson Line bought it out in 1931. Other interesting developments in maritime trade include lumber and coal shipping in the 19th century,

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later see the books shown earlier to her class.

Dawson's was then located at 627 Grand Avenue and I made my initial visit the following Saturday. So, as a pudgy, freckled-face girl I stood enchanted before Mr. Dawson as he told of early printers, book binders and given a short tour of the book shop. The hour and a half flew by, and when thanking this generous stranger for his time and consideration, I blurted, "It would be heavenly to work in a store such as yours!"

Mr. Dawson's bright and very dark brown eyes studied me intently. He asked what plans I had for the forthcoming Christmas holiday season and then suggested I come in during that time and work for him.

Graduation faced me in January and now, I was about to serve as an apprentice for two glorious weeks in the finest antiquarian book shop west of the Mississippi! Those two weeks eventually stretched into nine wonderful months.

How to tell about those days during the depths of the Depression which came to California much later after it had hit the Atlantic Seaboard and mid-Western states?

Photo courtesy, Dawson's Book Shop

Anna Twohey Hager—1935.

Photo courtesy, Dawson's Book Shop

Ernest Dawson—1931

To be enclosed in a book world of rich and rare treasures and considered as one of the staff (in spite of my insufficient training and knowledge), was indeed an experience strange and wonderful. It still remains so for me.

Located on Grand Avenue, the building was a long, narrow structure with a balcony perched above the main room at the rear of the shop. Along the Wilshire Boulevard wall, Gile McLaury Steele had painted a bright mural entitled, "The Bookworm." Mr. Dawson had commissioned the scene to depict a crowded book shop with an avid collector perched atop a tall ladder, lovingly holding an open tome with two other books tucked under his arms, completely lost in the enchantment of good books. Names of Dawson's most frequent customers appeared on the backs of one row of books — flattery — and a delight to the owners of the names. As the years passed, the mural faded, due to the strong sunlight, but everyone who passed took time to enjoy this unusual treat.

The Steele mural graced that long wall for twenty years before the building was demolished and Dawson's moved westward to Figueroa Street.

An important theatre, Tally's Criterion, was located almost across the street, on Grand, and to the south was Walker's Audi-

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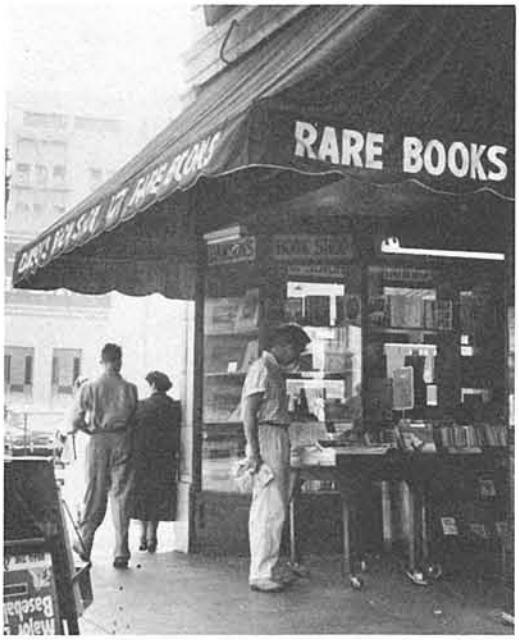
Photo courtesy, Dawson's Book Shop



Dawson's Book Shop at 627 S. Grand Avenue.

torium where exciting silent films from Scandinavia, Russia, Italy and France were shown.

Around the Corner, on Sixth Street, was Jake Zeitlin's shop and famed "Book Shop Row," long since gone but so well described in Lawrence Clark Powell's *Books West Southwest.*

A perpetual invitation hung over the doorway to Dawson's to "Come In and Browse." To the right of the entrance, in a corner, seven or eight shelves were filled with an odd assortment of titles plainly marked: "All Over 100 to 250 Years Old! $1.50 to $3.00."

Sad-eyed folk would enter Dawson's clutching a treasured family possession or Bible, hopeful that it might bring sorely needed funds to meet taxes, medical bills or simply, for food or clothing.

I recall Ernest Dawson never lost his depth of understanding and kindliness when approached by these individuals, want and pathetic eagerness plainly written in their faces. He well understood privation and the need for the encouragement and hope these visitors sought.

Mr. Dawson would take their precious hoped-for link to sudden monetary gain and examine it and then explain the merits or lack existing in the book submitted. If their faces registered consternation or disappointment, he would take them to these shelves, at the front of the shop, and explain the marked differences between a rarity and a commonplace title.

Not very often did anyone leave feeling he had been misunderstond or deprived by a "grasping book dealer." Mr. Dawson always took time for such people and, usually, asked that they be brought directly to him. It was remarkable that he found the time, and certain desperate visitors must have, at times, sorely tried his patience and caused him grief when he was unable to assist them.

In the shipping room, from time to time, another set of shelves were filled with books, too shabby and worn to be offered for sale — fiction, non-fiction and text-books. School boys and girls, in need of some standard publication, but lacking funds to buy, would be directed to these shelves to help themselves. Often, book scouts asked for permission to scan these shelves hopeful of finding a title that might, at best, bring 25 to 50 cents, perhaps more. Mr. Dawson took especial delight in any discoveries they made. He never forgot that the springboard for his entrance into the antiquarian book world was his initial purchase of over 2,000 books for one cent apiece from the Salvation Army.

Along the north wall, at the rear of the shop, were large bins under a long counter which contained the "lay-aways." Here, small collectors, temporarily out of funds, could store their book finds and pay as little as 50 cents a week before claiming their treasures.

Photo courtesy, Dawson's Book Shop

Browsing for bargains at Dawson's Book Shop about 1948.

Some items remained "in custody" several months and were never touched except when requested by the purchaser who wished to savor once again his find or to keep track of his payments.

On March 20, 1935, Ernest Dawson, in a note to me wrote: "You have learned sufficiently and you are applying your knowledge so that you are really contributing something worthwhile to the profits of the shop. Beginning this week, you will receive $6.00. I will watch your achievements and hope soon to be able to increase the amount. I feel very good about your progress. You have real purpose and I'm confident you will make a success of your work along the lines you are pursuing. I am happy to have you here and all the others in the shop feel the same way. All happiness to you — Sincerely, Ernest Dawson."

Shortly, after receiving this note, I joined the "lay-awayers," and made my first purchase, *Rembrandt: His Life and His Time,* by Emil Michel, London, 1894, the first edition in English, a two-volume set with 250 tinted plates and 67 full page plates.

Weekly I added a small pittance to the purchase price of $7.50 — sheer madness — considering my pay, but book madness is a thing apart and can only be appreciated by fellow book collectors. Even today, so many years later, I still experience the joy of ownership when handling my beloved first book purchase, its fine plates a constant source of pride and pleasure.

All employees were requested, when beginning at Dawson's, to present a portrait or shapshot of themselves, to be placed in *The Album.* Every anniversary *The Album* is still brought forth and visitors pour over it much to the chagrin or delight of former and present-day employees.

The balcony was crammed with *Western Americana* and books on the Occult Sciences and Miss Eleanor Reed, a remarkable lady, well informed in both fields, was in charge.

Indeed, it was a fascinating place. Miss Reed and some of the notable visitors to her bookish eyrie shared wonderful conversations with me. Young Muir Dawson, whenever home from school, then a lad of seven or eight, would scamper up the stairs eager to help and carry books down the stairs.

Some visitors would spend hours expatiating on occult theories but Miss Reed bore it all with noble patience. On certain other days, a young man sporting a black, turtlenecked sweater would scale the stairs, two at a time, and head for the *Western Americana* side of the balcony — later he became head of one of the great libraries in the West, Larry Powell, of UCLA.

One quickly learned not to inquire or delay the progress of anyone headed for the balcony. One day I approached a lady dressed in lavender-hued clothes, from head to shoes, including her hair! The visitor assumed that I too was interested in Metaphysics and launched into a lengthy discourse. No doubt, the rapt expression on the lady's face, and the one of discomfiture on mine, amused older staff members. Soon thereafter, Tom Neal taught me to note the demeanor of those headed for the balcony.

My introduction to the works of Hubert Howe Bancroft began when a slender reed of a man, with sparkling blue eyes, white hair and a Van Dyke beard, asked, "Have you read *California Pastoral,* or perhaps, *Literary Industries,* by Bancroft?" Robert Ernest Cowan, the doyen of California bibliographers and librarian for the William Andrews Clark Library, stood by my desk eager to discuss Bancroft and his *Works.*

Mr. Cowan held that Bancroft and his contributions to the field of *Western Americana* would, in time, be fully recognized and urged me to become acquainted with his *Works.* (Aside: At that time, 1935, the 39 volumes of *Bancroft's Works,* in full sheep binding with black morocco labels was priced at $50.00, compared to 1981 prices of $680 to $900.00. Bancroft has truly been discovered!).

That afternoon, I gained a wonderful and helpful friend, who later, (perhaps in jest) would introduce me as his protégé in Dawson's. As the years progressed the bibliographies of Robert Ernest Cowan and of his son Robert Granniss Cowan, have gained in stature and importance.

It was sheer magic to be on the sidelines when teas were held in the First Editions Room, an alcove off the main sales room. Not only did I see, but meet, well-known writers

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and collectors such as Hugh Walpole, Jean Hersholt, Dr. Egerton Crispin, Hazel Dreis, J. Gregg Layne, Paul Jordan-Smith and Robert Ernest Cowan to name a few.

Dawson staffers presided at these teas. Many college students made it a must to drop in at Dawson's, not only for the refreshments served but to have an opportunity to meet noted writers. Every courtesy would be extended to these future patrons of the book world.

When Mr. Thomas Hatton, of Leicester, England, considered, perhaps, the world's supreme authority on Dickens "in parts," arrived in Los Angeles, Mr. Dawson had special displays prepared in his honor. Later Catalogue 105 (May, 1935) carried a fine portrait of Mr. Hatton and his comments on the joys of collecting *Dickensiana.*

A major portion of the shop's business was conducted through carefully prepared and well-illustrated catalogues compiled by staff members. The mailing service was very large and Mr. Dawson encouraged much correspondence as well as sharing of literary news items that might prove of value to some client or staff member.

When trained staff members were on buying trips to Europe, their letters and reports were shared with those who remained in the Shop. When the huge boxes arrived, "Father" (we never called him that to his face!) Dawson would stand by in high anticipation to see the new arrivals. Excitedly, he would clutch a book and walk to someone's desk, perhaps mine, exclaiming: "Hold this in your hands! Isn't it wonderful? Note the fine binding and printing. Imagine such a treasure on the Pacific Coast! Look at it now before it disappears on a collector's shelf or in a private institution!"

At such times busines came almost to a standstill, everyone sharing in his rapt pleasure and interest while the unpacking went on. Of course, serious note was made by the office force regarding proper invoices and numbers, as the books were plucked from the boxes — but they too shared in the excitement.

A steady flow of small notes were penned by Mr. Dawson to each staff member calling attention to some book, display work, perhaps a suggestion to look at a certain catalogue or attend a lecture in the nearby library or school.

Mr. Dawson's hearing was impaired and he intensely disliked using an odd-fitting hearing piece which clamped over the top of his head. Most of the time, the hearing aid hung above his desk, on the wall, near his telephone. He dearly loved to talk to his patrons and was immeasurably irked when forced to don the uncomfortable, head-hugging device, by the poor acoustics.

The 'grapevine' among book dealers and book scouts, would begin humming when Mr. Dawson began marking down prices on books which had been on his shelves two or more years. It was Dawson's belief that books should be moved to make room for newer, and perhaps, rarer items, shelf space being at such a premium. Some rather prominent book dealers, as well as collectors, can claim that a goodly portion of their stock or library, in those days, were obtained during "Father's" mark-down days. Such practice is rarely indulged in by today's dealers. Dawson never cringed when marking down prices; he felt it a healthy and stimulating practice and created opportunities for the small collector to acquire some longed-for edition, or, perhaps stimulate additional purchases.

As the youngest staff member, I inherited a special and unusual task — having an occasional lunch with the Boss! Never having been in a restaurant or a downtown cafeteria before, whenever Mr. Dawson would nod or tap me on the shoulder, I was always ready to accompany him on one of those noontime excursions. Off we would go to hear some aspiring politician or professor of economics from a nearby college, while dining. Although, I didn't quite understand or follow too clearly the conversations held during such sessions, they were unusual and very different from those of the book world. Doubtless, many in the group wondered at the rather odd combination of a man of Mr. Dawson's stature having a short, plump girl following alongside and sitting in rapt attention while words flew about the room.

The Depression made deep scars on those who lived through a most trying and difficult

period. The men who attended these luncheon 'seminars' might have been too visionary in their efforts and dreams to alleviate the intense sufferings of their fellow man, but they were at least making an attempt to right unhappy situations.

One of my dutes was to read and clip numerous American or European catalogues and affix the clippings with a minute edging of paste, to the inside cover of a similar edition found on the Dawson shelves. A practice now discontinued in today's book shops.

My education in *Western Americana* grew and Mr. Dawson would remind me every so often, "Take time to *look* at the books you are handling. There is no rush, make this your educational background." He knew that a college education might not be possible for me, so he urged me again and again, to take every opportunity to study the rich materials in his Shop. All in all, a remarkable and rich apprenticeship for a high school graduate.

Ernest Dawson bookplate designed by Charles Joseph Rider. *Hager Collection*

Ernest Dawson's policy of permitting interested and sincere patrons the rare privilege of handling his stock proved a good investment, and also, served as strong inducements to encourage future book collectors as well. Dawson's Book Shop provided pleasure and relief to many of his clients which could be found nowhere else in such troubled times.

Well printed, beautifully illustrated catalogues, and many unique publications, parties honoring new publications and authors, are still held, a tradition carried forward by Ernest Dawson's sons, Glen and Muir, in their modern designed fine book shop in Los Angeles.

For me, it was, indeed a most wonderful Book Shop!

Monthly Roundup continued...

the creation of naval bases in the 20th century, and continuing expansion of facilities and harbor improvements.

AUGUST

Richard Dillon, former head of the Sutro Library, spoke on "Neglected California Authors" whose work to a large degree was based on Southern California experiences. Focusing on five writers of travel and nature essays, Dillon alerted the Corral to the contributions made by these observers of the California scene. George Wharton James, a native of England, fell in love with California and wrote reams extolling its virtues, some 80 books and pamphlets, including travel guides and descriptive volumes long on words and short on style. In contrast to James, John Van Dyke's descriptions of the California deserts were original in style and have proved enduring. Van Dyke, author of 40 books, came from New Jersey seeking relief from asthma; he found it in Southern California's desert areas.

Thomas Beasley, unlike the prolific James and Van Dyke, wrote but one book, *A Tramp Through Bret Harte Country,* documenting his walking tour of the Mother Lode country.

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The Day Los Angeles Was 100 Years Old

by Esther Boulton Black

It was the birthday celebration of the second oldest pueblo in the state. The date was September 5, 1881, when Los Angeles staged a party described by the editor of the Los Angeles *Herald* as "the finest we have ever seen on the American continent." The founding date of the city was actually September 4, but in 1881 this date fell on a Sunday, so the hundredth anniversary was observed on the following day.

The "finest ever" celebration began with Father Peter Verdaguer conducting the solemn high mass at the Plaza Church of Our Lady Queen of the Angels, starting at 9 a.m. The church was lighted by gas, and three flags hung on the wall. The Pope's white and gold flag was flanked by flags of the United States and of Spain. A portrait of President James A. Garfield had been placed in the church, and Father Verdaguer spoke "with much feeling," expressing the hope for Garfield's recovery from an assassin's bullet. Fifty young women sang from a special platform erected for the celebration, and a band played.

The big event of the morning was a parade, led by a cavalcade of *caballeros.* In California's pastoral era, *rancheros* had practically lived in their saddles. About a fifth of the city's population had Spanish surnames; but lack of Californio leaders, combined with Anglo aggressiveness, had caused a virtual collapse of Latin prestige. But the wholehearted response of the *caballeros* this September day indicated that they still retained great pride in their past. Their horses were decked out in splendid silver-decorated saddles and bridles. Even though most of the Californios had lost their land and their cattle in the disastrous drought of 1864, they refused to sacrifice these remnants of their former glory. Colorful costumes of the horsemen contributed to the festive scene. Only one Californio, however, was featured in the celebration. He was Judge Ygnacio Sepúlveda, son of the once wealthy landowner, José Andrés Sepúlveda.

In contrast to the *caballeros* was the next entry — a creaking *carreta,* pulled by a team of oxen. The *carreta* carried two of the city's most senior citizens — Benjamina, said to be 117 years old, and Laura, age 102.

The parade's grand marshal was General George Stoneman, a staunch Democrat and a veteran of both the Mexican and Civil Wars. A West Point graduate, he had accompanied the Mormon Battalion to California in 1847. In 1870 he was placed in charge of the Arizona Department and took part in the Indian Wars there. His most recent political service had been on the state railroad commission, provided for in the recently adopted state constitution in hopes of controlling the Southern Pacific. But Stoneman was only one of three commissioners, and the other two men favored the railroad, leaving him for the moment politically powerless. Stoneman's appearance in the parade no doubt had political overtones; he had his eye on the governorship — an ambition he would realize in 1883.

Perhaps the parade's biggest celebrity was Governor George C. Perkins, a Republican who owed his political success to the Southern Pacific machine. Born in Maine, he had run away from home when he was twelve years old. Arriving in San Francisco in 1855, by age twenty he had grossed half a million dollars from a store he owned in Oroville. He also achieved financial success from sheep and cattle ranches and from various business enterprises in San Francisco and Sacramento. Perkins generously shared his carriage with several other state officials.

Judges occupied the next carriage in the parade. Two were Superior Court judges, Volney E. Howard and Ygnacio Sepúlveda. They were the first judges to be named in the newly created judicial system. General Howard had gained his military title as an

officer in the California National Guard. A former southerner who dared to oppose the prevailing belief that citizen vigilantes were necessary to preserve order, Howard was one of the few politicians of the day free from corruption. Sepúlveda, born in Los Angeles in 1842, had been educated in the east. His political career included service in the state legislature, and terms as county and district judge. A third judge, Oliver S. Witherby, also rode in the carriage.

Curiously, there was no mayor of Los Angeles in the parade. The lack was more than made up for by other carriages. Two volunteer fire departments, the Thirty Eights and the Confidence brigades, attracted excitement. Fraternal organizations were well-represented. Not one, but a number of Masonic lodges participated in the parade. All kinds of vehicles, including some covered wagons, gave historical interest.

As the parade proceeded south on Main Street, it passed some of the most important buildings in the city. In 1869 Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of California, had built the famous Pico House — a three-story brick structure reckoned the finest hotel in the Southwest. Reopened earlier in 1881 after extensive improvements, the hotel accommodated the governor, his aides, and other dignitaries visiting the city for the birthday celebration.

The most impressive building on Main Street in 1881 was the Baker Block. Built by Colonel R.S. Baker, it was three stories high and was topped by three towers. The building looked more like a church than a business and professional building. A Baker Block address was the goal of every ambitious lawyer. And there were lawyers galore in Los Angeles — many able and well educated men attracted by the lucrative business of handling land title cases before the United States Land Commission. *Rancheros,* unable to speak English, were compelled to hire lawyers. Often they were forced to pay for these services by deeding land to lawyers. For those lawyers who were unable to afford the Baker Block, there were many other brick blocks along Main Street — desirable because of proximity to the courthouse with its famous clock tower.

Another important building was the Downey Block, located at the junction of Main, Spring, and Temple Streets. It had been built by former Governor John G. Downey, an opportunist who started his career by marrying Maria Jesus Guirado. He went on to accumulate sizable real estate holdings, lending money at the prevailing rate of five to ten percent per month interest. Foreclosures were inevitable.

The ground floor of these buildings was occupied by stores and offices. Thirsty lawyers gave good patronage to 26 saloons. Dining rooms in the St. Charles (formerly Bella Union), St. Elmo (formerly Lafayette), and United States Hotels served meals costing 25 cents. Chinese laundries, barber shops, doctor and architect offices, hardware, clothing, and grocery stores, plumbers, photographic studios, tailors, watchmakers, and lumber dealers were just some of the businesses lining the parade route. At least two of the city's three banks were located on Main Street.

Among the spectators and participants in the parade were many who could recall how the town had looked back in 1850 when California became a state. Adobe homes, many with dirt floors, housed rich and poor alike. Many *rancheros* maintained two homes — one in town and another at their rancho. Water for the pueblo came from a *zanja,* or ditch system, which was constantly in use by washerwomen who lined the banks of the *zanjas.* Drinking water was purchased from a horse-drawn cart that traveled from house to house.

Barely thirty years had passed since statehood, and many changes in the city's life and economy were evident. In 1876 San Francisco and Los Angeles were connected by the Southern Pacific, making travel to the east possible over the Central Pacific Railroad. An express train left Los Angeles daily for Lathrop, to connect there with the Central Pacific and points east. The rich were no longer content with dirt floors. The fine homes of leading citizens were located along San Pedro, Main, Spring, and Fort (now Broadway) Streets, according to the 1880 census. Victorian in style, with bay windows, verandas, and fancy-turned woodwork, these

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homes replaced the once prevailing adobe architecture.

Following the parade came the third feature of the day, an exhibit and mass meeting at the Horticultural Pavilion. To attract exhibitors, the Wells Fargo Company had offered to transport any exhibit without charge that weighed twenty pounds or less. The Southern Pacific, possibly as a good-will gesture to conteract the bitter feeling that existed for its charging excessively high freight rates, advertised a reduced fare for passengers coming to the birthday celebrations.

At six p.m. the doors of the Horticultural Pavilion were opened, and the public streamed in to view extensive exhibits of agricultural products, wines, and historical relics. Growers proudly displayed thirty varieties of grapes. Many exhibits reflected the changing economy of the region as ranchos were being subdivided into farms. Citrus and deciduous plantings were increasing as well as hay and grain. Sheep had replaced the cattle "on a thousand hills." The exhibits of 1881 told the story.

The climax of the day's festivities took place at the St. Charles Hotel, with a dinner, speeches, and dance, sponsored by the Ladies of the St. Vibiana Cathedral. Permission to use the hotel had been granted by Wallace Woodworth. His wife was the granddaughter of Antonio Lugo, an early Californio patriarch. Speeches followed the dinner. J. DeBarth Shorb, president of the Horticultural Society and son-in-law of pioneer resident Benjamin D. Wilson, introduced Governor Perkins. The governor held forth for half an hour, his speech bringing "forth repeated laughter." Next, Judge Sepúlveda spoke in Spanish, followed by Judge Howard with an address in English. The crowd was so large and noisy it was almost impossible to hear the speakers.

The speechmaking over, members of early Californio families presented a number of authentic Mexican dances for the delight of the audience. A fireworks display brought the events of the day to a close.

Perhaps some of the fun-living qualities of the Spanish-speaking population had rubbed off on the more recently arrived Yankee residents of Los Angeles, for the centennial celebration did not end on September 5. Dances continued on September 6 and 7, with a 50¢ admission charge. And special entertainment during the week was provided at Turnverein Hall by traveling theatrical groups. As a matter of fact, dances continued in honor of the city's birthday throughout the year. Brass bands traveled the streets at night, announcing "thespian delights."

The Los Angeles *Herald* announced that 30,000 people had attended the celebration.

Centennial parade, September 5, 1881. Taken from the intersection of Main and Spring Streets.

By way of contrast, the *Alta California* of San Francisco estimated the crowd at 12,000. Since Los Angeles, according to the 1880 census, had a total population of just under 12,000, the *Herald* might have been guilty of a little exaggeration. But then, 1881 was a year of optimism, and the editor of the *Herald* expressed an almost impossible dream when he predicted that some time in the future, "Los Angeles might achieve a population of 300,000."

Corral Chips

C.M. *Dan M. Gann* reports the passing of his father, Walter W. Gann, who back in 1955 addressed the Corral on "A Cowboy Below the Rimrock." Gann was a member of the Denver Corral and wrote extensively about his experiences as a cowboy . . . C.M. *Robert W. Blew* attends a three-week National Science Foundation Workshop at Stanford University on implementing the new state History-Social Studies framework. The purpose of the workshop is to develop guidelines and lessons, explore resources, and clarify the framework so it may easily be utilized by local school districts . . . A.M. *Don Pflueger* is elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Southern California . . .

The Corral is well represented at the June 1981 annual Conference of California Historical Societies. *Hugh Tolford, Iron Eyes Cody, Dutch Holland, Dudley Gordon, Dwight Cushman,* A.M. *Victor Plukas,* A.M. *William Burkhart,* C.M. *Joseph Northrop,* and C.M. *Dr. James Shebl* all take part in the program, with C.M. *Peg Cassidy, Bob Scherrer, Frank Newton,* C.M. *Billie Robinson,* and C.M. *Joe Doctor* in attendance. Sorry if you were overlooked! . . . C.M. *Gene Bear* provides the entertainment at the annual installation banquet of the Sunland-Tujunga Police Council Corps. . .

At the Los Angeles Public Library reception for its exhibition of historic photographs donated by Security Pacific National Bank on July 19, many Westerners could be seen, including *Bob Cowan, Tony Kroll, Bob Scherrer,* and *Ray Wood,* and A.M.'s *Dick Cunningham* and *Victor Plukas;* also C.M.'s *Katie Ainsworth, Peg Cassidy, Bob Hattem,* and *Joe Northrop.* There may have been others, but it was quite a crowd. . .

Monthly Roundup continued...

Photograph by — Iron Eyes Cody

From left, Associate Jerry Selmer, Deputy Sheriff Bill Escherich and speaker Richard Dillon.

Charles Francis Saunders left Pennsylvania for California and a late-in-life literary career. Known mainly for his descriptions of wildflowers, Saunders has been unjustly neglected. His best work was *The Southern Sierras of California.* Rounding out Dillon's quintet was J. Smeaton Chase, who wrote on the Sierras and the Yosemite Valley. Dillon adjudges Chase, whose prose at times excelled the writing of John Muir, to be the best of the group. Taken together, these authors produced "minor classics" remembered best for their immediacy and observation rather than style and lyricism. Neglected but not forgotten, many of their works are still found in antiquarian book stores.

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The Physical Setting of The Los Angeles Area

by Dr. Richard F. Logan

The physical setting of the Los Angeles Basin and the adjacent areas of coastal southern California and Baja California is unmatched anywhere in North America and, indeed, in only five other areas on earth. This uniqueness has, in turn, helped to produce here a culture that is even more unique, and which has, in recent decades, come to serve as a prototype for cultures in many other parts of the world.

Climate is at the basis of this uniqueness: all other physical aspects are intertwined with climate everywhere, and especially here in southrn California. In most of the world, rainfall is distributed throughout all the seasons of the year, or is concentrated in the summer. But here, the rainfall is concentrated in the winter months, and the summers are rainless. Such a climate occurs about the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and on its islands, and hence was long-ago named the Mediterranean climate. It is also to be found in southern Africa, two areas in Australia, central Chile, and nowhere else on earth.

In our case, the Mediterranean climate extends from about San Francisco to Ensenada, but is limited to only a narrow coastal strip — in the case of Los Angeles reaching inland only to the farther slopes of the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains, beyond which lie the deserts.

Winter is the rainier period, but there is no guarantee of the degree of its raininess. The precipitation is produced by storms which originate in the North Pacific off Alaska, and which approach southern California from the Northwest. Within the storms, a rotary movement commonly draws in warm and very moist air from the central Pacific in the vicinity of Hawaii. Precipitation occurs when that air is forced to rise, either over another mass of air, or over the windward slope of a mountain. Since the other air mass may or may not be there, but the mountain always is, precipitation is always heavier and more frequent on the western slopes of mountains than in the valleys at their feet. In the Los Angeles area, the valleys average between ten and fifteen inches per year, while the windward slopes of the higher mountains may receive an annual average in excess of forty. In the lower areas, virtually all of the precipitation falls as rain, but in the higher mountains, snow often occurs above five thousand feet.

In some winters, storms come frequently to the Los Angeles area, and linger long, all the while pouring down moisture. The resultant floods, landslides and mudflows wreak havoc on the landscape, causing damage to property and risk to life and safety. In other years, the rains fail to appear, and the resultant droughts bring great hardship to humans and great loss of their livestock and crops. Wet years produce an abundance of grasses, leaves and herbage which, drying during the ensuing summer, forms a great mass of potential fuel for violent conflagrations.

The temperatures of the coastal portions of the Los Angeles area are mild at all seasons. In winter in the immediate vicinity of the sea, freezing temperatures are almost unknown, and the same is true for many sun-warmed south-facing hillsides. Inland valleys like the San Fernando Valley and the Pomona-San Bernardino Lowland experience much lower temperatures, especially where cold air drains downslope off the nearby slopes and collects in the valley bottoms on cold calm nights. But the days are generally pleasantly warm everywhere except in the higher mountains. In summer, the coastal area is always pleasantly cool. The daily sea breeze, where allowed to penetrate freely, warms steadily as it blows inland, and becomes very hot by the time it reaches the more inland valleys. But nowhere is there the searing heat of the desert, nor the frigid winter cold of the Middle West or the Northeast of the United States.

Meterologically, the summer situation is curious. Over all of southern California and the adjacent deserts, hot, dry, and very clear air descends from high aloft downwards towards the surface. In the mountains and the deserts, it reaches the surface, producing very clear visibility and both great heat in daytime and rapid colling after sundown. Along the coast, the seabreeze intrudes as a slim wedge of cool air beneath the descending air, clearly evident because of its moistness, its haziness and its coolness. This occurrance of cooler air beneath warmer air is called a temperature inversion. Today, the haziness of this air is greatly increased by the addition of air pollutants to the cooler air. Fog is also common in the coastal area in summer, and sometimes penetrates inland over most of the Los Angeles lowland in winter.

The nature of the vegetation reflects many of the climatic characteristics described above. Foremost are the effects of the long summer drought. To exist, to endure it, plants either: 1) adopt xerophytic (drought-enduring plant) characteristics, 2) become dormant in summer, 3) grow only during the spring, the species being perpetuated through seeds designed to endure the drought, or 4) grow only in places which have year-round surface or subsurface water. The xerophytic adaptations include use of resins and oils in place of water as the sap; reduction of water loss through reduced size of leaves, varnished leaf surfaces, and the removal of the ordinary leaf functions to the stems. Many shed their leaves entirely during the summer dry season. Many annual plants live for only a brief period during the spring following a rainy winter, and their seeds persist through many years until another wet winter occurs. Only along stream courses where water percolates through the sands of the channel all year, or on shady north-facing slopes where the sun never shines and where rainwater is preserved from evaporation, do we find trees or very large shrubs.

Four types of vegetation generally occur in southern California: riparian vegetation of tall trees and brush along watercourses; chaparral, ranging from short to tall brush over hills and lower mountains; oak-grass parklands in the interior valleys; and forests largely of coniferous, needle-leaf trees on the higher mountains. All, even the montane type, are xerophytic — adjusted to the long summer drought — and as such differ greatly from the vegetation of the non-Mediterranean world.

Geologically, the greater Los Angeles area possesses samples of almost every type of rock known — some of very great age, some very recent. Some of the later formations contain vast quantities of petroleum and natural gas, which have brought much fame and prosperity to the area. Equally famous (or infamous) are the many faults (planes of breakage of the earth's crust along which there have been movements) which break the area into many irregular-shaped blocks. Movements along some of these faults have caused violent and disastrous earthquakes, and the resultant catastrophes become ever more destructive as more people build larger structures in the earthquake-prone areas. While the notorious San Andreas Fault lies some 25 to 40 miles from Los Angeles, tremors generated by movements along it can and will cause great damage in the Los Angeles area. And there are many other, lesser known yet threatening, faults throughout the area, any of which could conceivably produce a violent earthquake.

The major outlines of the larger landform features have been produced largely by movements along major faults. Thus the faces of many of the major mountains are fault planes, and the mountains themselves are blocks of the earth's crust raised up thousands of feet to their present positions.

The details of the mountain landscapes are largely the result of erosion by running water. Runoff from the heavy rains of winter and the melting snows of spring carry soil and rock fragments downslope into streams, which in turn use these fragments like sandpaper to abrade the rocks over which they flow, thereby carving their valleys even deeper into the mountains. A very rugged landscape results: steep-sided, narrow-bottomed canyons carved deeply into the mountains rising abruptly above the lowlands.

The streams carry the loose materials out of the mountains into the lower adjacent

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basins and drop them there as smooth-surfaced deposits of gravel, sand and clay, known as alluvial fans, sloping gently down from the foot of the mountains to the center of the basin or to the sea. Thus both the interior basins (such as the Simi, San Fernando, and San Gabriel Valleys and the Pomona-San Bernardino Lowland) and the coastal lowlands (the Los Angeles Basin and the Oxnard Plain) consist of smooth plains bordered at least in part by very rugged mountains. Much of their surfaces were originally subject to flooding by the very streams that formed them; modern obstruction of original drainage channels has set the stage for disastrous flooding in years of heavy rains.

In areas underlain by soft shales, the gently rounded hills are pleasing to the eye, are easily grazed by cattle, and, when terraced for roads and house-sites, become especially prone to mud-flows and landslides.

The coastline originally consisted of two contrasting types: narrow rocky benches backed by steep cliffs; and low coasts and sandy beaches interspersed with shallow lagoons cut off from the sea by sandbars. No real harbors exist anywhere except at San Diego, and ships were forced to use the poor shelters afforded by minor headlands. The lagoons were areas of reeds and grasses and thick black mud, the haunts of water fowl, crabs and shellfish.

Into this environment at least 20,000 years ago came bands of people at the hunting and gathering stage of culture; and their descendants or their successors were still at that same stage when the first outsiders arrived only two centuries ago. They were remarkably and completely adjusted to the environment: they derived their total living from the immediate area and they made full use of every resource available.

They lived in small groups whose size was dictated by the amount of food available within the immediate neighborhood — their "territory." The chaparral provided modest quantities of seeds, berries, bulbs, corms and roots. The riparian areas, the parklands of the interior valleys, and the north-facing slopes of many mountains had oak trees, the source of acorns, the major staple food of the people. Everywhere there were deer, rabbits, and other animals to be hunted and snared, and smaller animals, down to snakes, lizards and grubs to be caught or collected. And for those fortunate enough to have the coast within their territory, the rich assemblage of fish, crustaceans, mollusks and sea mammals was available as an abundant food source.

Dwelling sites were usually near water supplies, the commonest being near the shore at a stream mouth. Dwellings were simple shelters protecting from the sun (ramadas) and from the wind and rain (wickiups). Since cold weather does not occur, substantial dwellings simply were not built. Political organization was almost non-existent, communications were very primitive and very local, and transportation was limited to walking and back-packing. Their world was limited to their immediate environs — they knew little of the second valley beyond the nearby mountain, let alone the deserts or the lands beyond the sea.

Considering the life-style of the Indian, the Los Angeles setting was reasonably pleasant. While we of today, accustomed to imported foods and pampered lives, would find the life rigorous and the foods sub-standard, to the Indian of that day, knowing nothing better and with no means of comparison with anything else, the land was adequate, it was acceptable, it was "home." It was no paradise, no "land of milk and honey" — yet infinitely better than the deserts to the east or the mountains with their heavy winter snows.

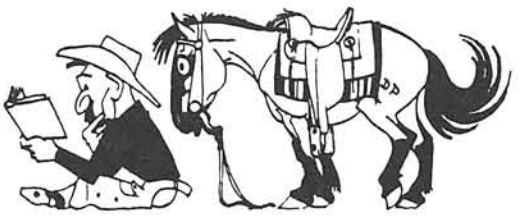
The advent of the Spanish altered greatly the landscape and the culture of the area. They introduced agriculture, irrigation, and animal husbandry, and the domesticated plants and animals associated therewith. Thus a stable, varied and reliable food supply became available. Agriculture was relatively easy on the smooth alluvial fans, irrigation water flowed easily by gravity in ditches from the canyon mouths, and crops flourished in the fertile soils. They built solid structures of stone and adobe, supported by solid timbers, roofed with tiles. They lived in relatively large communities, which were in turn a part of a larger world community. But in spite of this, transportation was still slow

and cumbersome, and only a few valuable items were worth the cost of transport; and while writing permitted the sending of written messages, communication was as slow as the transport. Consequently, the Spanish settlements in California, including Los Angeles, were almost totally self-sufficient and independent.

In the centuries that have followed, the Los Angeles area has been integrated more and more firmly with the rest of the world: railroads criss-cross the continent, the nation, and the area; ships from everywhere dock at totally artificial ports; aircraft fly to nearly every country. Foods, fibers, fuels and ideas are exchanged with users and suppliers anywhere. Modern inventions and techniques permit water to flow to Los Angeles from distant sources; permit yards, gardens, fields and orchards to be watered; permit homes to be heated or cooled; permit people to move, talk and see quickly from place to place. An artificial environment has been created — of plants, water, energy, and concepts from elsewhere.

And yet, the basic elements of the original environment, and many of its effects, still persist — underlying the superimposed veneer of artificiality. It still rains in winter and the summer is rainless. Floods, mudflows, landslides still cause great damage in the rainier years. Each dry season, conflagrations ravage the hills and mountains, more destructive each year as homes penetrate farther into the chaparral. The coast is still milder than the interior, and fog still occurs along it; but the temperature inversion serves as a trap for pollutants, creating the notorious Los Angeles smog.

In spite of all of its bad aspects, the Los Angeles area nevertheless exerts a tremendous drawing attraction for people from other parts of the world: for inhabitants of the colder-winter—hotter-summer Middle West, East and South of the United States; for seekers of greater economic opportunity; for those desiring a more relaxed social environment; for those seeking "The Good Life." And because communications are so rapid and so colorful, the basic concepts and the intimate details underlying this life-style are transmitted to all corners of the world, and become the prototypes for the development of similar life-styles elsewhere. Thus Los Angeles has become the style-setter and the pace-setter for the world.



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

Limericks Historical and Hysterical by Ray Allen Billington. W.W. Norton & Co., 1981, 127 pages, $9.95.

With this book, our late, former Sheriff Ray Allen Billington has departed our midst in the spirit of that old show biz adage — "leave 'em laughing." It was well known to all who had ever talked with him or heard him speak that among his many talents was the gift of humor. It is never better displayed than in this work published at the time of his death.

As one who had been tickled by limericks over the years, and never grown tired of them, I must tip my hat to Sheriff Ray for the discerning collection he has presented for our enjoyment. While far from exhaustive (that honor probably belonging forever to Gershon Legman's definitive efforts) Billington presents just enough five-liners to amuse without drowning us. He does Westerners a further service by presenting one chapter of limericks devoted to The Old West — a neglected area in this art form.

Fortunately he has told it like it is. To be good, a limerick just has to be off-color or suggestive. The clean ones are generally insipid and hardly worth remembering. He had a healthy outlook toward this literary

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form. He said, "I am not in the least puritanical, not easily offended by any combination of four letter words, not disturbed by the most eccentric exhibitions of sexuality. I do not, happily, qualify among the ranks of the saints, . . ." Since most members of the Los Angeles Corral can identify with these same words, they should find this volume great fun. Get a copy and laugh yourself silly.

My own feeble memorial to Billington in limeric form follows:

A foremost historian named Ray,
Wrote of lands where the buffalo play.
He researched his works,
Studying Westerners quirks,
Like cowboys who roll in the hay!

— *Jerry Selmer*

California Education: A Brief History by Irving G. Hendrick, *Harvest Empire: A History of California Agriculture* by Lawrence J. Jelnick, *Afro-Americans in California* by Rudolph Lapp, *Modern California Politics, 1917-1980* by Jackson K. Putnam. Golden State Series, San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1979.

Boyd and Fraser Publishing has developed a simple recipe: take two outstanding editors, Norris Hundley, Jr. and John A. Schutz; add excellent writers; throw in fascinating subjects; all of which adds up to a series that is informative, useful, and extremely readable. Each of these small tracts, approximately one hundred pages, is moderately priced, and each contains notes, selected readings and three are illustrated; however, only two of the volumes are indexed. This series does not stress new or sweeping interpretations but is meant as a general introduction to a specific topic or as a convenient summary of the information available on the topic. While they are not specifically aimed at the specialist, almost everyone can benefit from them.

Hendrick, as the title implies, gives a brief summary of California education starting with the Spanish period and ending with the financial and social problems of today. While the book centers on public education, adequate attention is given to private institutions. To this reviewer, an interesting theme was the developing of professional teaching standards and the changes in teaching techniques and philosophy over the years.

Harvest Empire is an overview of California agriculture starting with the Indians and bringing it down to the present. The book centers on the development of major agriculture, but it is not blind to the problems of the farm workers and small farmers. One useful feature is the inclusion of a series of maps showing the centers of major products.

Lapp's book, *Afro-Americans in California,* is the weakest of the four. The author takes a rather traditional approach to the subject. Most of the standard information found in any textbook is included; however, some events considered basic are either omitted or slighted. Overall this volume does not reach far beyond the interpretations or information in any good California history book.

Putnam takes the general approach that progressivism is a major influence in California politics. Although the book is divided almost equally between the first thirty years and the last thirty, more information and interpretation is given for the period beginning with Pat Brown. The author shows the interrelations between campaigns for state and federal office, propositions, court cases, and changing social attitudes. Overall, the book is an excellent introduction to the present California political clime; the last sentences neatly sum up the present political picture.

If the remaining titles, which will include works on minorities, the environment, water, early politics, and vigilantes among others, meet the standards established by the first four, this series will be an outstanding contribution to California historiography. These works will be helpful to students, both high school and college, and will be useful references or introductions to anyone interested in California and its history.

—*Robert Blew*