



Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California (California History Sesquicentennial Series)

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Perhaps never in the time-honored American tradition of frontiering did "civilization" appear to sink so low as in gold rush California. A mercurial economy swung from boom to bust, and back again, rendering everyone's fortunes ephemeral. Competition, jealousy, and racism fueled individual and mass violence. Yet, in the very midst of this turbulence, social and cultural forms emerged, gained strength, spread, and took hold. *Rooted in Barbarous Soil*, Volume 3 in the four-volume California History Sesquicentennial Series, is the only book of its kind to examine gold rush society and culture, to present modern interpretations, and to gather up-to-date bibliographies of its topics.

Chapters by leading scholars in their respective fields explore a range of topics including migration and settlement; ethnic diversity, assimilation, cooperation, and conflict; the dispossession of Indians and the Californios; the founding of schools and universities; urban life; women in early California; the sexual frontier; and the development of religion, art, literature, and popular culture. Many rarely seen illustrations supplement the text.

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- Sales Rank: #1742630 in Books
- Published on: 2000-10-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.00" h x 1.00" w x 7.00" l, 1.70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 384 pages

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

Perhaps never in the time-honored American tradition of frontiering did "civilization" appear to sink so low as in gold-rush California. A mercurial economy swung from boom to bust, and back again, rendering everyone's fortunes ephemeral. A volatile assemblage of transients were fixated on "making their pile" and returning home. *Routed in Barbarous Soil*, Volume 3 in the four-volume California History Sesquicentennial Series, is the only book of its kind to examine gold-rush society and culture, to present modern interpretations, and to gather up-to-date bibliographies of its topics.

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General themes lend unity to the chapters: reinterpreting gold-rush society and culture for modern Californians; the interplay of traditional cultures and frontier innovation; the impact of the California experience on the nation and the wider world; and the importance and continuing legacy of ethnic and cultural diversity. Together with the other three volumes in the series, *Routed in Barbarous Soil* will stand as a monument not only to scholarship on the Gold Rush, but also to central themes in American historical scholarship at the end of the century.

About the Author

Kevin Starr is California State Librarian and University Professor at the University of Southern California. He is the author of the acclaimed multi-volume series *Americans and the California Dream* (1973-1998).

Richard J. Orsi is Professor of History at California State University, Hayward, and editor of *California History*. He is the coeditor of *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush* (California, 1998) and *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California* (California, 1999).

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