

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE* **Current**

October 21, 1999

Joan Magruder

## **UCSB CONFERENCE MINES THE MYTHS OF THE GOLDEN STATE**

To millions of immigrants over the past 150 years, California has been the pot of golden opportunity at the end of a rainbow that spanned from disadvantage to a new and better life.

In California, it was said, you could pluck gold out of the ground or pick an orange right off a tree.

You might work the counter at a drug store one day, and be a star in pictures the next.

No need to worry about feeding the family. There's always work in California.

So the legends said.

Reality was much different.

And anyone's perception of the truth was often a blend of both.

Renowned author Kevin Starr headlines a distinguished group of historians and scholars who will separate California fact from fantasy Friday and Saturday, Oct. 29 and 30 at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in a conference titled, "Myths of California."

The conference is free but seating is limited and advance registration is recommended. (Call 893-3907.)

Saturday's luncheon (\$12.50 general, \$ 9 students) also requires a reservation.

Starr, the State Librarian of California and chairman of the California Gold Discovery to Statehood Sesquicentennial Commission, will give the conference's keynote address at 4 p.m. Friday in the Hatlen Theatre.

His talk is titled, "The Myth of California: Confessions of a Mythoholic."

A prolific writer, Starr is author of the popular California Dream series of books: Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915, Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era, Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California, and The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s. He is also the author of Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s and many other books.

The conference will open at 1 p.m. on Friday with the first lecture, "Myths of Spanish and Mexican California," by UC Santa Cruz historian Lisbeth Haas, scheduled to begin at 1:15 p.m.

"One myth I'll explore is that Indians entered the missions by force," said Haas, the author of Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936, winner of the Elliott Rudwick Prize from the Organization of American Historians.

At 2:15, Gray Brechin, UC Berkeley geography professor and author of the just-published Farewell Promised Land: Waking from the California Dream will speak.

His talk is titled "Never Too Many People: Land Monopoly and Promotion of 'The Golden State.' "

At 3:15 UCSB history professors Mario Garcia and Elliot Brownlee will join John Johnson of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in a round table discussion.

Starr's talk at 4 p.m. is followed by a reception at Casa de la Guerra of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, 9 East de la Guerra Street, Santa Barbara.

Saturday's events open with a 10 a.m. lecture titled "Come Back, Tom Joad: Thoughts on a California Dreamer," by CalTech history professor William Deverell.

Tom Joad, John Steinbeck's lead character in *The Grapes of Wrath*, in many ways is the embodiment of the California Dream, Deverell says.

"He's become the representative man of our hopes for a more expansive democracy."

Carlos Cortes, an emeritus history professor at UC Riverside, will give a lecture titled "Movies, Multiculturalism and Mythmaking" at 10:45. At 11:45, W. Davies King, UCSB professor of Dramatic Arts; Janet Walker, UCSB associate professor of Film Studies; and Margaret Rose, Co-director of the California History-Social Science Project, will do a panel discussion.

At 1:30 p.m. Peter Schrag, writer and former editorial page editor of the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper, will present his lecture, "California at the Millennium."

Schrag will pose some of questions that face the state as it moves into a new century and millennium, among them, can we now begin to close the extraordinary gap between our booming private economy and our lagging public infrastructure and between our haves and our have-nots.

The conference is jointly sponsored by UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, UCSB Extension, UCSB History Associates and the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation.

---

## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.