

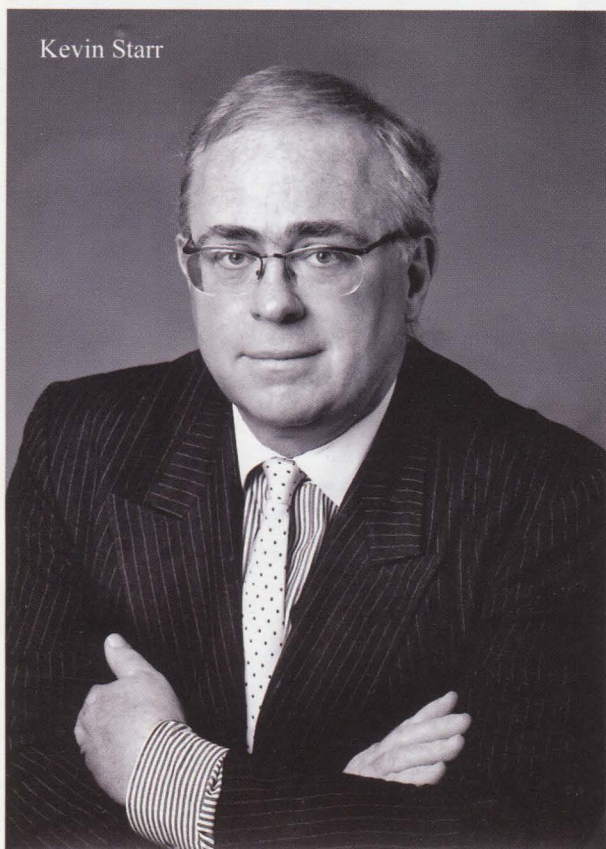


The Southern Californian

The Historical Society of Southern California

Summer 2007 Volume 19 Number 2

Kevin Starr



"Southern California is an epicenter of American creativity, accomplishment, and growth. For all this to continue along proper channels, a sense of the past remains necessary; and that is why the Historical Society of Southern California, in serving the history of the region, serves its present and future as well."

Kevin Starr

President's Message

by John Pohlmann

HSSC Welcomes Kevin Starr to Advisory Board

HSSC IS TRULY HONORED that one of California's most respected and distinguished historians, Kevin Starr, has recently become a member of our Advisory Board of Directors. Not since the era of Hubert Howe Bancroft and Theodore Henry Hittell in the late 19th century has anyone dared to interpret California history with such breathtaking breadth, sustained penetrating analysis, and seamless eloquence as Kevin Starr. Ever since the appearance of his initial volume on the theme of Americans and the California Dream in 1973, historians like myself and general readers have eagerly awaited the publication of each new volume (six so far with at least one more to come).

As one who has been privileged to teach California history, I have found these volumes an incomparable source of insight, information, and inspiration. What I especially appreciate is Starr's remarkable ability to highlight the dreams, challenges, and opportunities so characteristic of California without overemphasizing our failures and imperfections, on the one hand, or crass and self-interested boosterism on the other.

In an age of specialization, we marvel at Starr's skill in explaining details usually only mastered by insiders and experts. Sometimes, of course, we readers come across tidbits we didn't exactly expect to encounter. In my own case, while eagerly devouring an especially fascinating chapter in *Material Dreams, Southern*

President's Message continued on page 8



Christa Cordova

CHRISTA CORDOVA probably never expected in 2005 that her part-time weekend job at the Lummis Home would evolve into one with substantially more responsibility. As the Society searches for a new executive director, Cordova holds down the fort.

While being interviewed at the Lummis Home to serve as a weekend docent, Cordova thought the job sounded interesting. "I fell in love with the place," she says. "It was really beautiful and peaceful."

Now Cordova answers the phone, directs messages to board members, picks up the mail and makes sure the treasurer gets bills for payment and does data entry—keeping membership information up-to-date. She also supervises the docents and gives tours herself.

Cordova came to Los Angeles from Guatemala, entering 10th grade at John Burrough's High School in Burbank.

After graduation, she attended L.A. Valley College while working as a teacher's assistant at Pocoima Elementary. The experience opened her eyes about herself and she decided, instead of a teaching career, to pursue a career in graphics design.

Christa has just completed her first year at Art Institute in the mid-Wilshire district. The school provides a basic background in web design, photography and graphic art, preparing students for entry level positions. Eventually she hopes to earn a master's degree from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. With it she hopes to become an art director for movies or television. She would also like to illustrate children's books.

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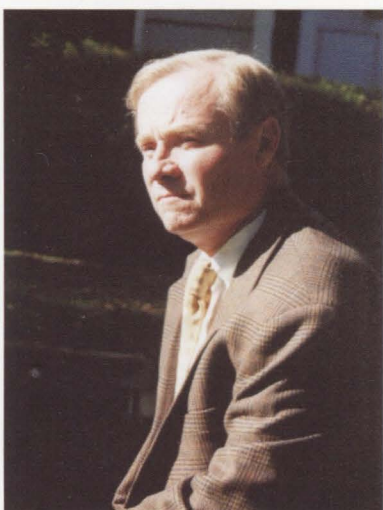
Office Hours
Wednesday - Sunday
12-4

The Lummis Home is open
to the public
Fri-Sun 12-4

Group Tours
Fridays by appointment

*HSSC's
temporary
office hours:
Wednesday
through
Sunday
Noon to 4pm*

William J.
Barger



William J. Barger

BILL BARGER received his master's and Ph.D. in economics at Harvard. There he encountered a prevalent belief that "culture ended at the Hudson"—an attitude he challenged as a native Californian and that prompted his serious research into the history of the West.

With his economics credentials under his belt, he served in a variety of executive positions with two major banking institutions—the Bank of America and Gibraltar Financial Corporation. Since 1988, he has served as advisor to a variety of organizations—both for profit and charitable. But the history of the West remained alluring.

When Barger returned to southern California, he lived in the mid-Wilshire district near Dawson's Book Shop. Barger met Glen and Muir Dawson and under their tutelage began collecting books on the West and California. Noting his interest, another friend, a professor of history, told Barger about the Stearns/Gaffey Collection at The Huntington. Barger became a Reader at the Huntington Library and delved into old ledgers, bills of sale and other miscellaneous papers, combining his expertise in economics with his interest in history. Barger who says he can be compulsive when doing research adds, "I like details. I don't like holes [in history] sufficiently enough that I want to plug them."

After several years of research Barger produced two lengthy articles which were published in the *Southern California Quarterly*: "The Merchants of Los Angeles: Economics and Commerce in Mexican California" Vol. 83, No. 2 (Summer 2000) and "Furs, Hides, and a Little Larceny: Smuggling and its Role in Early California's Economy," Vol. 85, No. 4 (Winter 2003)

Barger believes his management experience—particularly with small businesses—will help HSSC grow and prosper.



Eric A. Nelson on
a private tour of
the White House

Eric A. Nelson

AN ATTORNEY specializing in probate and property management with an office in Glendale, Eric Nelson went to Southwestern law school after receiving a degree in political science at USC. However as a fourth generation Californian, Nelson is firmly hooked on southern California history.

His great-grandfather, Alexander Nelson, came to Los Angeles in 1850 after an unsuccessful try at gold mining in northern California. He established an alfalfa farm on Calle Principal in Green Meadows, mid-way along the route of the Banning stage coach from the Plaza to San Pedro. The site is now the intersection of Main and Manchester avenues.

While researching his family, Nelson located a survey map at UCLA's archives showing an arrow pointing to "half-way house," as the Nelson farmhouse was also known. One of Nelson's most treasured books is an original copy of Horace Bell's *Reminiscences of a Ranger*. In it, Bell refers to Alexander Nelson of Green Meadows.

Nelson's main collections center on the California Gold Rush and include correspondence, commercial paper, stationery, and banking and legal documents.

His enthusiasm for southern California history continues in his involvement with the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners, the Autry National Center, the Zamorano Club and the Book Club of California.

On behalf of the Westerners Nelson was instrumental in allying their scholarship program with the Autry Museum. Scholars of the history of the West receive funds to help defray the cost of travel or temporary housing.

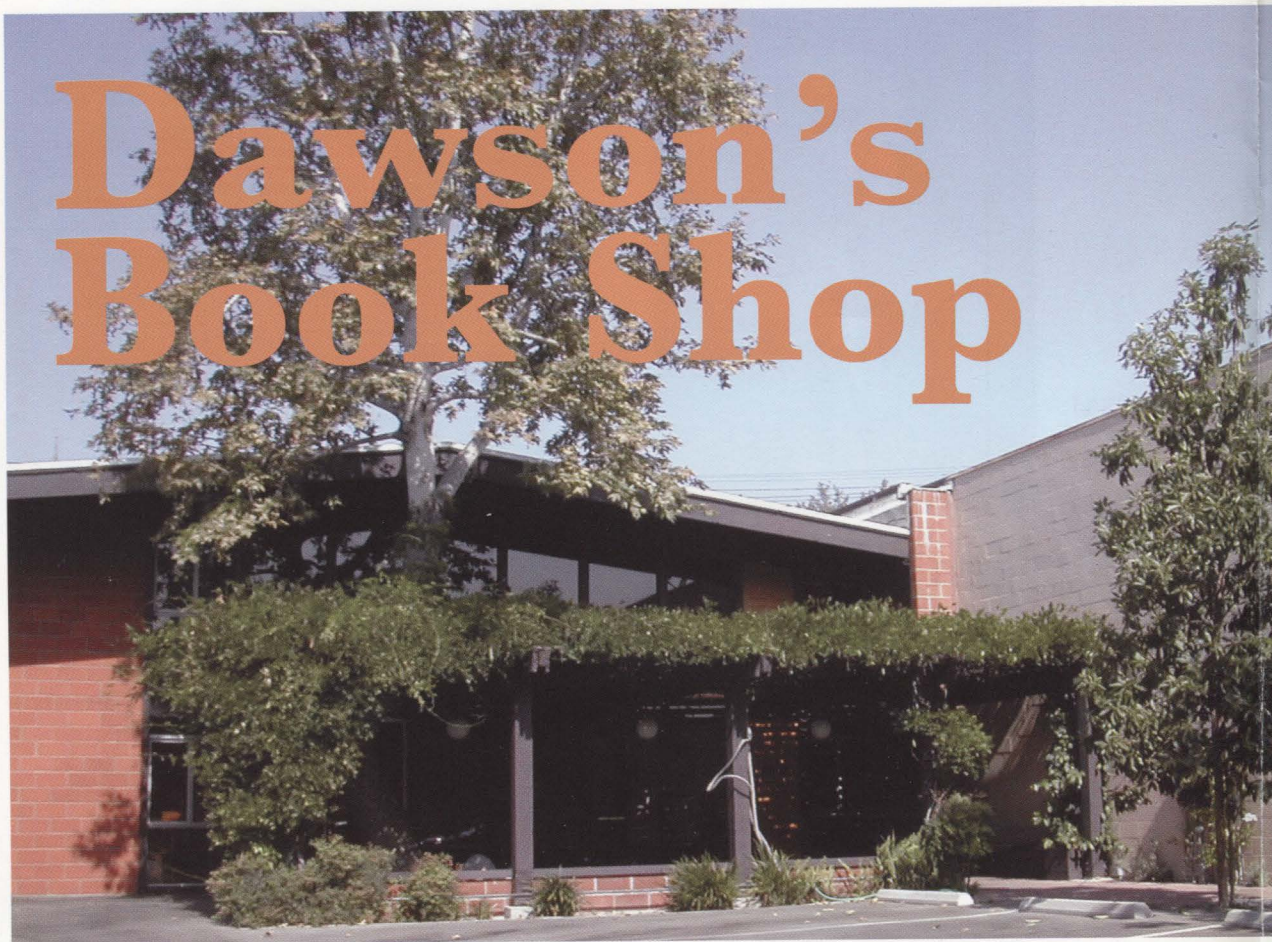
Nelson says, "I love LA history and have a great respect for HSSC—for what it is and for how long it has been in existence. I feel my administrative skills will be of assistance to the organization."

Meet
HSSC's
Two
New
Board
Members

Dawson's Book Shop

by Carole
Dougherty

This is one in a
series of articles on
long-time southern
California businesses



Shortly out of high school, Ernest Dawson bought a collection of 200 books from the Salvation Army for a penny a

piece. He then turned around and sold one of the books for \$2.50. The experience set him on his life's path—despite his earlier ambition to become a clergyman. As one admirer says, Ernest “went from the Good Book to the good books.”*

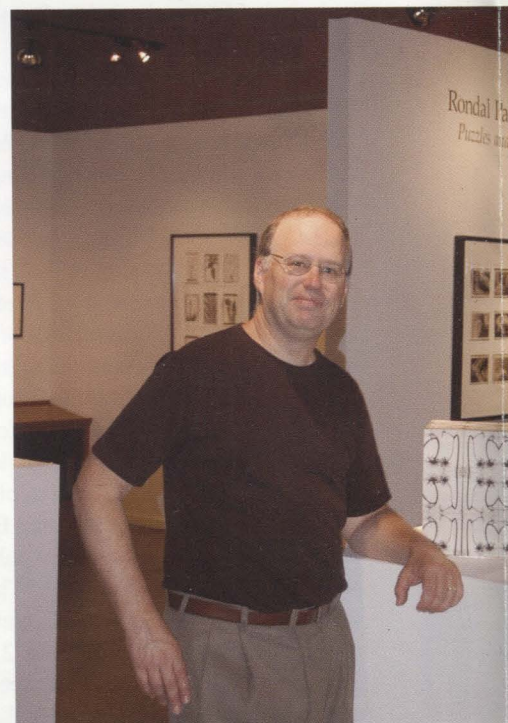
Established in 1905, Dawson's Book Shop was one of the first antiquarian book shops in Los Angeles and the first in Los Angeles to publish a catalog on rare books.

Ernest saw books as objects of intellectual and aesthetic curiosity. Books could be beautiful in themselves. But on top of that, they revealed other cultures and other times. Kevin Starr in his volume on southern California history through the 1920s—*Material Dreams*—says books provided Ernest, a voracious reader, with a first-rate university education.

Los Angeles became a book lover's paradise. Writers, intellectuals, artists, historians gathered at book stores and formed book clubs. Those who could, collected. And Ernest Dawson, with his knowledge and love of books, became the “go-to” person. He was in the right place at the right time.

*Stuart Robinson, book collector and Zamorano Club member, describing Ernest Dawson at Villa Gardens in Pasadena on August 2, 2007.

Dawson's Book Shop/
Michael Dawson
Gallery
535 N. Larchmont Blvd.
Wednesday-Saturday
10 am-5 pm
(323) 469-2186

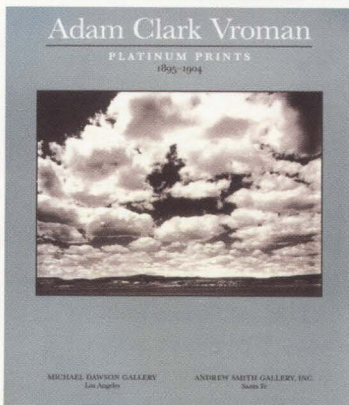
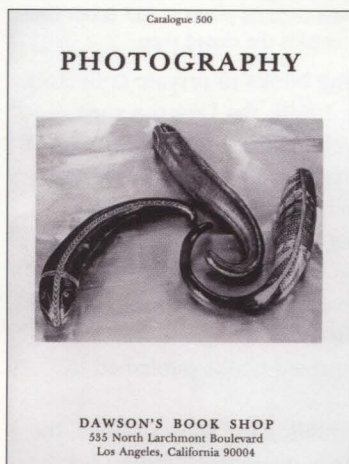


Michael Dawson, the third generation to own and operate Dawson's Book Shop, has added Michael Dawson Gallery to the rare book store. The inaugural exhibit in 2005 was devoted to the work of Ad Vroman. Currently, just behind Michael in this photo, rare California photographer Rondal Partridge's work is on display.



Photo used with permission. Copyright © 1981 Marilyn Sanders

Glen and Muir Dawson in the Larchmont shop in 1981. The shop, full of book shelves and cabinets, displayed fine press books and books on the American West. Muir died in 2005 just two months shy of Dawson's 100th anniversary. Glen, 95, lives in Pasadena.



Catalog 500, Michael Dawson's first, featured books and photographs relating to the history of photography. The Adam Clark Vroman catalog was published on the 100th anniversary of Dawson's Book Shop with essays by Jennifer A. Watts and Andrew Smith and Vroman's travel diaries from 1895-1897.

WHEN ERNEST DIED IN 1947, his sons were already involved in the book business. Glen, the elder, now 95, graduated from UCLA in 1935. After graduation he took a trip around the world stopping to work at Marks and Co., in London and visiting Emil Hirsch, a German book dealer in Munich.

One of Glen's earliest memories of the book business, however, took place when he was about 8 years old. His father took him to El Alisal where Charles Lummis had books Ernest planned to buy. At the time, Glen says Lummis's eyesight was failing. So Lummis took his time- and work-worn hands and ran them over Glen's face to better "see" the youngster. It's a memory still vivid for Glen.

Muir, who died two months before the 100th anniversary of Dawson's, was a graduate of Pomona College, one of the Claremont Colleges, and was drawn to books on printing techniques and fine press books. Once, when the opportunity arose, he even took a class on fine printing at Scripps College. It was the beginning of a love affair with fine press books.

During the tenure of the second generation, Dawson's moved to Larchmont. The shop had moved several times in downtown Los Angeles and the effort was demanding. Agnes, Muir's wife, found the lot on Larchmont Boulevard and convinced the brothers to build there. The building, a Craftsman bungalow designed by Alfred Wilkes, was completed in 1967.

DAWSON'S continued on page 6

Check out Melrose Avenue

North Larchmont Boulevard ends at Melrose Avenue. Although the funky part of Melrose is several miles farther west, there are several businesses worth exploring near this terminus.



PARAMOUNT STUDIOS

5555 Melrose Avenue
The studio where "Breakfast at Tiffany's," "Chinatown," all of the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby "Road" movie pictures and television productions like "Star Trek" and the "Untouchables" were produced. Take a two-hour walking tour for \$35.
Starting in the fall, free tickets to television tapings —like the Dr. Phil show— will be available.
323-956-4848
www.paramount.com/studio



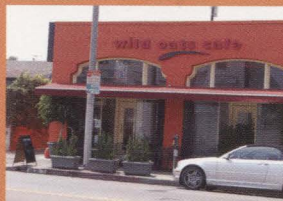
RALEIGH STUDIOS

5300 Melrose Avenue
The modern building with the curved glass façade is the public face of a facility that mainly rents out sound stages and equipment. Television series, commercials and independent films are filmed here. Audiences are welcome to studio tapings like "America's Funniest Home Videos." www.tvtickets.com



ASTRO BURGER

5601 Melrose Avenue
For a quick inexpensive meal try this burger place.



WILD OATS CAFE

5630 Melrose Avenue

More on page 6

More Melrose Avenue



LUCY'S EL ADOBE CAFE 5536 Melrose Avenue

The exterior belies the colorful interior where Mexican fare is featured. It was here that former governor Jerry Brown met Linda Ronstadt. The place is frequented by studio workers.

Parking available in back.
323 462-9421



ANTIQUE SHOPS

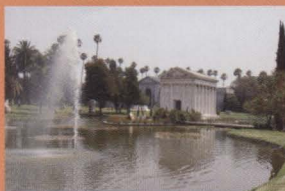
In the 5600 block of Melrose and at the east corner of Larchmont you'll find antique shops where set designers find items for movie sets.



THE BINDERY

5720 Melrose Avenue
Look for Jaques and Becker, a paper cutter and hand press, in the window. Owner Charlene Matthews continues a craft rarely seen today—hand book binding.

Parking in the rear. 323 962-2109



HOLLYWOOD FOREVER MEMORIAL PARK

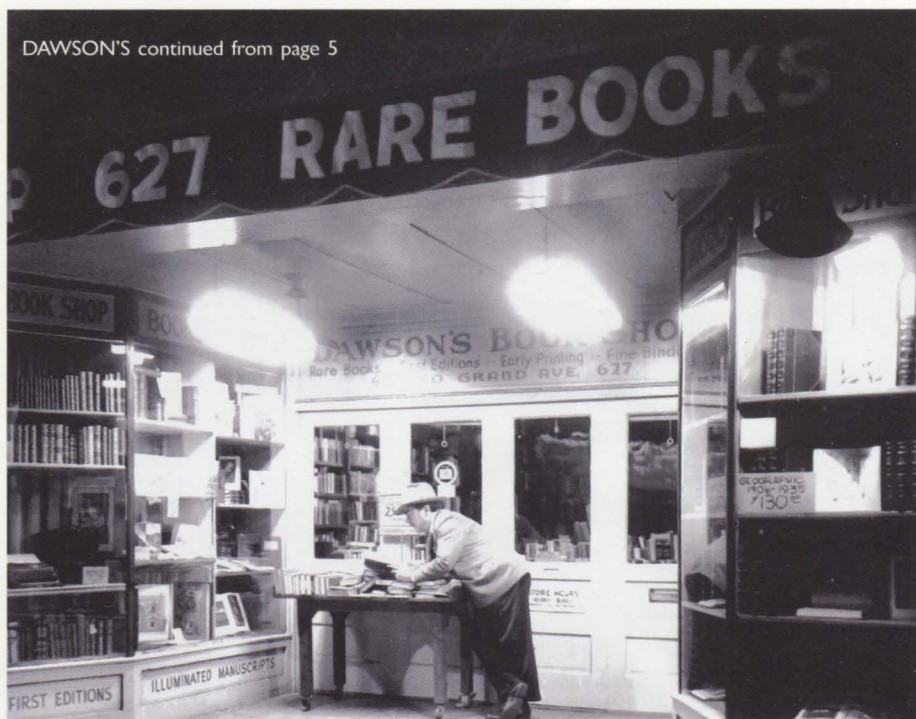
6000 Santa Monica Boulevard
Go north on Gower Street along Paramount Studio's west side, turn east on Santa Monica Blvd and you will find a cemetery with some of the most famous stars in Hollywood history interred. Studding the grounds are headstones, monuments and statues. Maps locating some of the stars' burial sites are available in the flower shop at the main gate.
323 469-1181

THAI CONSULATE

A modern building between 607 and 627 Melrose.

THE ALEXANDER APARTMENTS
On Van Ness between Santa Monica Boulevard and Melrose Avenue
The building is a standout with its red paint and Greek letters.

DAWSON'S continued from page 5



Ernest Dawson believed in moving old inventory. To do this he provided a bargain table of books in the alcove outside the book shop. Payment was on the honor system. Here in the undated photo at 627 South Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles, an engrossed customer browses outside the closed shop.



Ernest Dawson, circa 1937

Besides providing books to private collectors and libraries in the 1960s, the Dawson sons published extensively. Glen was the publisher of two 50-volume series on *Early California Travels* and *Baja California Travels*, now collectors' items. Photographer Arnold Hylen's two books which document an early L.A., *Bunker Hill, A Los Angeles Landmark* and *Los Angeles Before the Freeways, 1850-1950, Images of an Era*, were among other prized books published by Dawson's.

By offering prepublication subscriptions, the Dawsons were able to guarantee funding for the enterprise. After the second world war, collectors and libraries were diligently buying finepress books and books on the American West.

IN 1985 MICHAEL, the third generation, joined Dawson's. He says, "No business that remains in business remains static—even the book business." So Michael brought his interest in photography to Dawson's. In 1989, Michael published Catalog 500—so named because the catalog was Dawson's 500th—listing more than 500 items including photographs and books on photography. In 2005 for the 100th anniversary of Dawson's, Michael published another catalog accompanying an exhibition of Adam Clark Vroman's platinum prints.

By 2000 Michael Dawson Gallery was in place in the spacious back area of the book store. Exhibits featuring photography—both current and historical—are mounted regularly. Like his father and uncle, Michael continues offering book forums, a nod to his grandfather's informal afternoon teas.

Though much has changed at Dawson's Book Shop—one thing remains the same: a deep and abiding love of books and the history of the American West.

Photos: Michele Clark

Photos of Dawson's Book Shop and Ernest Dawson courtesy Glen Dawson

THE LUMMIS GARDEN: Still a Model for SoCal's Dry Years

IN 1985, THE LUMMIS WATERWISE Garden was installed after two years of drought and completed just before another five years of ex-tremely dry winters. How timely then and how now, once again, the garden remains relevant for southern Californians.

Southern California's semiarid desert environment receives an average 15 inches of annual rainfall but this year received a record-breaking low precipitation of a little more than three inches.

How do our gardens survive with such uncertain rainfall? Most of southern California's water comes from sources outside the region, regions themselves threatened with low rainfall. Although the Lummis Home and Garden is owned by the City of Los Angeles, the Historical Society took the initiative and worked with landscape architect, Bob Perry, and his students at Cal Poly Pomona to develop a waterwise garden.

Funded by grants from the Department of Water and Power, the Metropolitan Water District, the City of Los Angeles and funds from the Historical Society of Southern California, the garden still remains the only public demonstration garden designed to show how to conserve water in a residential setting.

Using native and Mediterranean plants and an irrigation system that delivers water only where it is needed, the garden uses half the water of a conventional garden. Colorful and full of texture,



Photo: Michele Clark

Here is a photo of the Lummis Waterwise Garden taken in October 2005. In a season when most gardens lack color, the orange flowers of lion's mane brightens up the entry. A decomposed granite path allows precious winter rains to seep into the watertable.

the garden shows how a yarrow meadow can replace a thirsty lawn. Visitors are often pleased to learn the meadow needs "mowing" only three to four times a year.

More water-saving features include decomposed granite pathways which allow water to percolate into the water table and dry streambeds lined with boulders. Educational panels provide additional information on how to develop a waterwise garden.

Although the garden looks its best in the spring, plan to visit the garden soon and see its resilience in these times of minimal rain fall.

*The
garden is
open
Fri-Sun
noon-4pm*

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For fast convenient renewing call (323) 222-0546

Please enroll me in the *Historical Society of Southern California*

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Free Museums of the Arroyo Day and December Holiday Open House
Discounted program and event tickets for family members
Membership in *Time Travelers* program

\$75 Regular Members

Receive all of the above

\$125 Contributing Members

All of the benefits above plus...
One special publication
Membership in *North American Reciprocal Museum* program

\$300 Patron Members

All of the above plus...
Two special publications

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR:

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\$1,250 President's Circle

All of the above plus...
Lectures and receptions featuring noted historians

\$10 Future Historians Ages 5-12

A book
Invitation to ice cream social and more

Membership contributions are tax-deductible within the limits allowed by law. For further information call HSSC at (323) 222-0546

Save the Dates

September 9

CALIFORNIA ADMISSION DAY

El Molino Viejo

Pasadena

Reception/Exhibit 6pm

Dinner 7pm

Program to follow

"Picturing Los Angeles"

Speakers

Jon & Nancy Wilkman

November 4

2 pm

DUNNING LECTURE

Occidental College

Johnson Hall

Eagle Rock

delivered by

William Deverell

entitled

"And the End of the War Came:

Southern California

and the

Aftermath of the

Civil War"

December 2

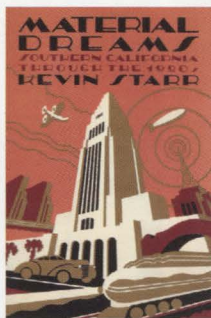
3-6pm

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Lummi Home

Los Angeles

President's Message continued from page 1



California Through the 1920s (1990), about my alma mater Occidental College during the decade when my parents also attended that venerable institution, I came across several pages devoted to English Professor Carlyle Ferren MacIntyre, who had inspired, among others, notable Southern Californians Lawrence Clark Powell and Ward Ritchie (both fraternity brothers of my father). In Starr's telling, MacIntyre was a "Europeanized bohemian" whose "flamboyant life-style" led

to rumors of his "bedding down the missionaries' daughters" and eventual dismissal. While my mother was not the daughter of missionaries, she was in fact an English major. More to the point, she actually dated the controversial professor while at Oxy and corresponded with him during a year she was at Columbia Teachers' College after she had graduated! I have read his letters to her, which she kept, and to my mom's credit, MacIntyre actually read some of her letters to his classes at Oxy.

BESIDES HIS INCOMPARABLE volumes on the California Dream, Starr has somehow managed to summon the energy and find time to write California history texts for high school and university levels, publish a novel, and for differing periods serve as State Librarian, regular columnist and restaurant critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, contributing editor to the *Los Angeles Times*, not to mention a mind-boggling myriad of other activities. Not surprisingly, these Herculean efforts have earned Starr more than thirty awards, honors, and grants, including the President's National Humanities Medal in 2006.

KEVIN STARR WOULD doubtless attribute much of his prolific and prodigious achievements to his deep spiritual faith. While his writing does not ignore the faults, failures and foibles of his subjects, it is reassuring that he never loses his faith in California, Californians, and the California Dream. It is also reassuring and a cause for celebration that Kevin Starr has faith in the Historical Society of Southern California to the extent that he is now a member of our Advisory Board.

Remember

VROMAN'S Gives Back

REGISTER AS A SUPPORTER of HSSC and VROMAN'S Bookstore will give back one percent of your purchases directly to the Historical Society. At the time of purchase make sure to let the cashier know you want to support HSSC.

VROMAN'S Bookstore, a Pasadena landmark founded in 1894, has long been an active location for author events, lectures, book discussions, workshops, and, with its vast book selection, a book browser's dream.

VROMAN'S

695 E Colorado Blvd

or

Hastings Ranch Shopping Center

3729 E Foothill Blvd

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