



California's Frontier Naturalists

Richard G Beidleman

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This book chronicles the fascinating story of the enthusiastic, stalwart, and talented naturalists who were drawn to California's spectacular natural bounty over the decades from 1786, when the La Pérouse Expedition arrived at Monterey, to the Death Valley expedition in 1890–91, the proclaimed "end" of the American frontier. Richard G. Beidleman's engaging and marvelously detailed narrative describes these botanists, zoologists, geologists, paleontologists, astronomers, and ethnologists as they camped under stars and faced blizzards, made discoveries and amassed collections, kept journals and lost valuables, sketched flowers and landscapes, recorded comets and native languages. He weaves together the stories of their lives, their demanding fieldwork, their contributions to science, and their exciting adventures against the backdrop of California and world history.

California's Frontier Naturalists covers all the major expeditions to California as well as individual and institutional explorations, introducing naturalists who accompanied boundary surveys, joined federal railroad parties, traveled with river topographical expeditions, accompanied troops involved with the Mexican War, and made up California's own geological survey. Among these early naturalists are famous names—David Douglas, Thomas Nuttall, John Charles Fremont, William Brewer—as well as those who are less well-known, including Paolo Botta, Richard Hinds, and Sara Lemmon.

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