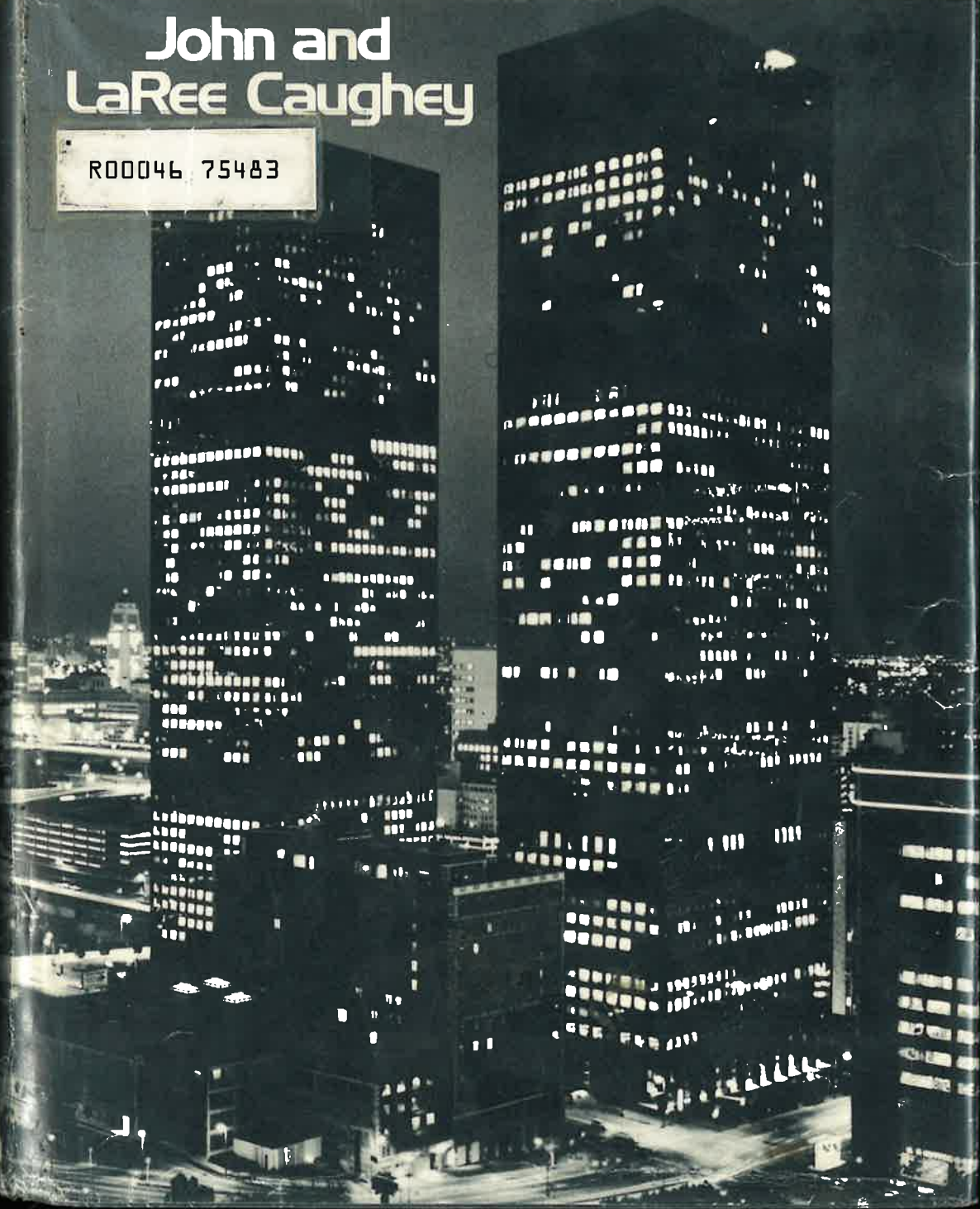


Los Angeles

Biography of a City

John and
LaRee Caughey

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JOHN & LAREE CAUGHEY

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Gold! Gold! Gold! from San Francisquito!

Gold! Gold! Gold! from San Francisquito!

J. M. GUINN

An early president and long-time secretary of the Historical Society of Southern California, J. M. Guinn was one of the most prolific writers on the early history of Los Angeles. Here he deals with a matter in which southern California had a small priority over the northern part of the state.

Abel Stearns says gold was first discovered by Francisco López, a native of California, in the month of March, 1842, at a place called San Francisquito, about thirty-five miles northwest from Los Angeles. The circumstances of the discovery by López, as related by himself, are as follows:

"López, with a companion, was out in search of some stray horses, and about midday they stopped under some trees and tied their horses out to feed, they resting under the shade, when López, with his sheath-knife, dug up some wild onions, and in the dirt discovered a piece of gold, and, searching further, found some more. He brought these to town, and showed them to his friends, who at once declared there must be a placer of gold. This news being circulated, numbers of the citizens went to the place, and commenced prospecting in the neighborhood, and found it to be a fact that there was a placer of gold. . . ."

J. J. Warner visited the mines a few weeks after their discovery. He says: "From these mines was obtained the first parcel of California gold dust received at the United States mint in Philadelphia, and which was sent with Alfred Robinson, and went in a merchant ship around Cape Horn." This shipment of gold was 18.34 ounces before and 18.1 ounces after melting; fineness, .925; value, \$344.75, or over \$19 to the ounce, a very superior quality of gold dust. It was deposited in the mint July 8, 1843. . . .

Pastoral Interlude

A petition to the governor [Alvarado] asking permission to work the placers, signed by Francisco López, Manuel Cota and Domingo Bermúdez is on file in the California archives. It recites: "Divine Providence was pleased to give us a placer of gold on the 9th of last March in the locality of San Francisco Rancho, that belongs to the late Don Antonio del Valle." This petition fixes the day of the month this discovery was made. . . .

William Heath Davis . . . states that from \$80,000 to \$100,000 was taken out for the first two years after their discovery. He says that Mellus at one time shipped \$5,000 of dust on the ship Alert. Bancroft says that "by December, 1843, two thousand ounces of gold had been taken from the San Fernando mines." Don Antonio Coronel informed the author that he, with the assistance of three Indian laborers, in 1842, took out \$600 worth of dust in two months. De Mofras, in his book, states that Carlos Baric, a Frenchman, in 1842, was obtaining an ounce a day of pure gold from his placer.

These mines were worked continuously from the time of their discovery until the American conquest, principally by Sonorians. The discovery of gold at Coloma, January 24, 1848, drew away the miners, and no work was done on these mines between 1848 and 1854. After the latter date work was resumed, and in 1855, Francisco García, working a gang of Indians, is reported to have taken out \$65,000 in one season. The mines are not exhausted, but the scarcity of water prevents working them profitably.

J. M. Guinn, *A History of California and an Extended History of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, 1915), I, 155-156.

Carrillo Family Anecdotes

HORACE BELL

In his day Horace Bell was the most spritely and acerbic writer in Los Angeles—its Ambrose Bierce. Editor of the Porcupine and author of the first locally published book, Reminiscences of a Ranger (1881), he left enough stories and commentaries to