



The Archaeology of California

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From The Preface

"Beneath the urban sprawl and golden hills of California lies one of the nations richest archaeological records. More people lived in California prehistorically than anywhere else in North America."

"Paradoxically, although most people are fascinated by archaeology, many Californians know much less about the archaeology of their own state than they do about that of Mexico, Egypt, and the American Southwest"

"Most literature consists of reports written by and intended for a small group of scholars. Very little has been written for the general public, which is one reason the public is ignorant about a subject it ordinarily would find interesting."

"Many archaeologists reject the notion of writing for general audiences."

"The most successful popular interpretations are localized or specialized works written by people not trained as archaeologists."

"Another factor inhibiting popular synthesis is the system of government contracts for environmental-impact studies that now fund most archaeological fieldwork in California. These studies have produced few published scholarly reports and essentially no reports for the general public."

"Popular syntheses are nonetheless needed. Knowledge about the state's archaeological record represents, after all, an important part of the cultural heritage of all Californians. Knowledge of the past has the power to enlighten and enrich the lives of those who command it."

"Public appreciation can also serve a more practical purpose. Vandalism is one of the most serious threats to California's archaeological resources, second only to expanding urbanism. By alerting the public to this fact, and by demonstrating what archaeology is about and why the destruction of archaeological resources represents such an irreparable loss, popular syntheses can perhaps reduce at least the casual vandalism that arises from simple ignorance."

Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 1984

