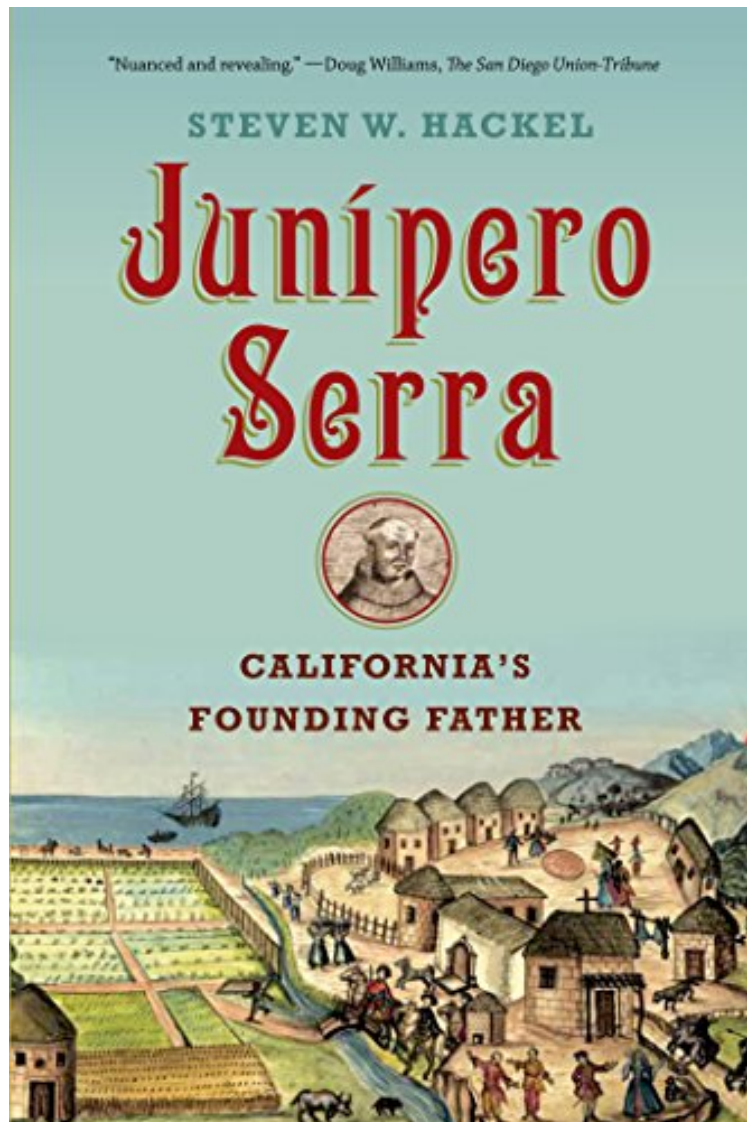


Junipero Serra: California's Founding Father

Steven W. Hackel

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Steven W. Hackel : Junipero Serra: California's Founding Father before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Junipero Serra: California's Founding Father:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. this description is not great depth but sufficient to illustrate the contrast in culture ...By Ida Rhodes This book provides a comprehensive history of Fr. Serra which includes a context for the foundation of his faith. The book is well researched making effective reference to his family, personal letters (from a variety of sources), Spanish and early Mexican correspondence. I found two aspects of this history particularly interesting: his religious intolerance and today's recognition of the Old World's catastrophic impact on native

populations in New Spain and Alta California in particular. Father Serra is cast as somewhat old school, liturgically dogmatic and heavily influenced by the strict Spanish inquisition period that still continued at his time (though its height preceded him in Spain by 200 years). Alta California's native tribes are described in a sympathetic and tragic manner. Clearly, this description is not great depth but sufficient to illustrate the contrast in culture appropriate to this story of Fr. Serra. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Otherwise he collected notches on his imagined list of good deeds to get into Heaven (my take, By Sherry the Bookworm More than fair, given Serra's excess zeal to save "pagan" souls. There were (a few) Spaniards who complained about the treatment of the indigenous peoples, but all Serra cared about was that the women not be raped by the soldiers (horrific as that was). Otherwise he collected notches on his imagined list of good deeds to get into Heaven (my take, NOT the author's!). Serra seems to have been a sleep-deprived obsessive-compulsive about Church doctrine, and forgotten Jesus' actual teachings of mercy and love. Hackel's book was so balanced I came to sympathize with poor old Serra. It's also a fascinating read - couldn't put it down. Hackel is far more sympathetic to Serra than I am, and that's a tribute to Hackel's extensive research and fascinating writing. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A well-researched and told story of the labor in exploring ... By Ted Estrada A well-researched and told story of the labor in exploring and evangelization of the native peoples by the tireless religious pioneers led by Fray Junipero Serra in claiming Alta California for the Spanish crown. Enduring extreme climates and hostile natives, Fray Serra was undaunted and worked day and night to bring Christianity to the California Indians. Later, held in awe by some, and cursed by his critics, Fray Serra continued with his arduous task, finally dying in his beloved new-found land. Saint or sinner, Fray Serra established the foundation for what would become the California of today. Professor Hackel has written a compelling book that captivates the read.

Winner of the Historical Society of Southern California's 2015 Neuerburg Award for the best book on Pre-Gold Rush California Finalist for the Southern California Independent Bookseller Association's Best Nonfiction Book of 2014 A Zocalo Public Square Best Nonfiction Book of 2013 A portrait of the priest and colonialist who is one of the most important figures in California's history In the 1770s, just as Britain's American subjects were freeing themselves from the burdens of colonial rule, Spaniards moved up the California coast to build frontier outposts of empire and church. At the head of this effort was Junpero Serra, an ambitious Franciscan who hoped to convert California Indians to Catholicism and turn them into European-style farmers. For his efforts, he has been beatified by the Catholic Church and widely celebrated as the man who laid the foundation for modern California. But his legacy is divisive. The missions Serra founded would devastate California's Native American population, and much more than his counterparts in colonial America, he remains a contentious and contested figure to this day. Steven W. Hackel's groundbreaking biography, *Junpero Serra: California's Founding Father*, is the first to remove Serra from the realm of polemic and place him within the currents of history. Born into a poor family on the Spanish island of Mallorca, Serra joined the Franciscan order and rose to prominence as a priest and professor through his feats of devotion and powers of intellect. But he could imagine no greater service to God than converting Indians, and in 1749 he set off for the new world. In Mexico, Serra first worked as a missionary to Indians and as an uncompromising agent of the Inquisition. He then became an itinerant preacher, gaining a reputation as a mesmerizing orator who could inspire, enthrall, and terrify his audiences at will. With a potent blend of Franciscan piety and worldly cunning, he outmaneuvered Spanish royal officials, rival religious orders, and avaricious settlers to establish himself as a peerless frontier administrator. In the culminating years of his life, he extended Spanish dominion north, founding and promoting missions in present-day San Diego, Los Angeles, Monterey, and San Francisco. But even Serra could not overcome the forces massing against him. California's military leaders rarely shared his zeal, Indians often opposed his efforts, and ultimately the missions proved to be cauldrons of disease and discontent. Serra, in his hope to save souls, unwittingly helped bring about the massive decline of California's indigenous population. On the three-hundredth anniversary of Junpero Serra's birth, Hackel's complex, authoritative biography tells the full story of a man whose life and legacies continue to be both celebrated and denounced. Based on exhaustive research and a vivid narrative, this is an essential portrait of America's least understood founder.

Meticulously researched . . . a must-read for anyone interested in Serra, California, or the history of colonialism in the Americas. Publishers Weekly A consummate archivist of California history, Hackel has produced a definitive Golden State biography. Kirkus s At last, in Steven W. Hackel's *Junpero Serra*, we have an intelligent and authoritative biography of the founder of California. Hackel's engaging narrative deftly transports us to the end of the eighteenth century and the frontier of the Spanish empire. His Serra is neither sinner nor saint, but rather a devout idealist who quietly helps unleash powerful forces of social change. *Junpero Serra* is an essential contribution to the history of the West. Hector Tobar, author of *The Barbarian Nurseries* Junpero Serra was a man for all seasons: a saint as well as an ogre, a founding father, an agricultural visionary, and a merciless imperialist in short, a figure whose legacy is nothing if not polarizing. Steven W. Hackel is a courageous biographer. His portrait of the Franciscan priest who invented California doesn't shy away from controversy: it is as evenhanded as it is humane. It proves, yet again, that this nation

wasn't built only by Puritans; it was also shaped by Spanish conquistadores, explorers, and missionaries whose choices continue to define us in countless ways. Ilan Stavans, general editor of *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* Steven W. Hackel's stunning biography so fully re-creates Father Junpero Serra's eighteenth-century life that one can almost feel the passionate certitude and searing drive that Serra employed to convert so many native Californians to Christianity and the cultural destruction and human emptiness that Serra's success unleashed upon them after his death. Hackel's exhaustive research quietly magnifies the measured judgments that propel this compellingly intimate yet historically expansive biography. It surpasses anything ever written about the West Coast's most potent and controversial founding father.' Ilan Stavans, general editor of *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* In this rich portrait of Father Junpero Serra, we see entire worlds collide, overlap, and forever influence one another. As complex and remarkable as the times in which he lived, Serra has long deserved a careful, smart, and judicious study, and now we have it. William Deverell, chair, Department of History, University of Southern California Steven W. Hackel's *Junpero Serra* is both a compelling narrative and a comprehensive study of the complexities of Serra's life and the transformative events of his time. A masterpiece. Jos Refugio de la Torre Curiel, author of *Twilight of the Mission Frontier* Junpero Serra is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of California and for lovers of biography. Sylvia L. Hilton, coeditor of *Nexus of Empire* About the Author Steven W. Hackel is an associate professor of history at the University of California, Riverside, and the author of the award-winning *Children of Coyote*, *Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850*. He also directs a project in digital history, the *Early California Cultural Atlas*, and was the curator of *Missions, Myths, and Memories: The Life and Legacies of Junpero Serra*, an exhibit that ran at the Huntington Library from August 2013 to January 2014. He lives in Riverside, California.