



This Land Was Mexican Once: Histories of Resistance from Northern California (Chicana Matters (Paperback))

Linda Heidenreich

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The territory of Napa County, California, contains more than grapevines. The deepest roots belong to Wappo-speaking peoples, a group whose history has since been buried by the stories of Spanish colonizers, Californios (today's Latinos), African Americans, Chinese immigrants, and Euro Americans. Napa's history clearly is one of co-existence; yet, its schoolbooks tell a linear story that climaxes with the arrival of Euro Americans. In *"This Land was Mexican Once,"* Linda Heidenreich excavates Napa's subaltern voices and histories to tell a complex, textured local history with important implications for the larger American West, as well.

Heidenreich is part of a new generation of scholars who are challenging not only the old, Euro-American depiction of California, but also the linear method of historical storytelling—a method that inevitably favors the last man writing. She first maps the overlapping histories that comprise Napa's past, then examines how the current version came to dominate—or even erase—earlier events. So while history, in Heidenreich's words, may be "the stuff of nation-building," it can also be "the stuff of resistance." Chapters are interspersed with "source breaks"—raw primary sources that speak for themselves and interrupt the linear, Euro-American telling of Napa's history. Such an inclusive approach inherently acknowledges the connections Napa's peoples have to the rest of the region, for the linear history that marginalizes minorities is not unique to Napa. Latinos, for instance, have populated the American West for centuries, and are still shaping its future. In the end, *"This Land was Mexican Once"* is more than the story of Napa, it is a multidimensional model for reflecting a multicultural past.

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