

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

High resolution photos available from info@lagoonhousepress.com

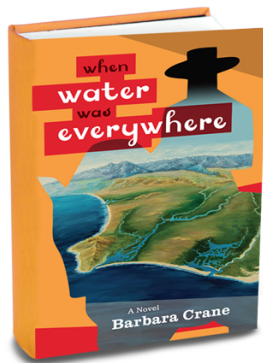
CONTACT: Marie Pal, tel. 310-991-3215

info@lagoonhousepress.com

Local Author Launches Historical Novel Set in Long Beach

Every day, millions of Southern Californians walk, ride, or bicycle over history. How many of us know the story of the vanished landscape beneath us?

May 15, 2016, Long Beach, California. It's a common misconception that the Los Angeles area is a desert. Local author Barbara Crane challenges that notion in her historical novel, *When Water Was Everywhere*, published by Lagoon House Press.



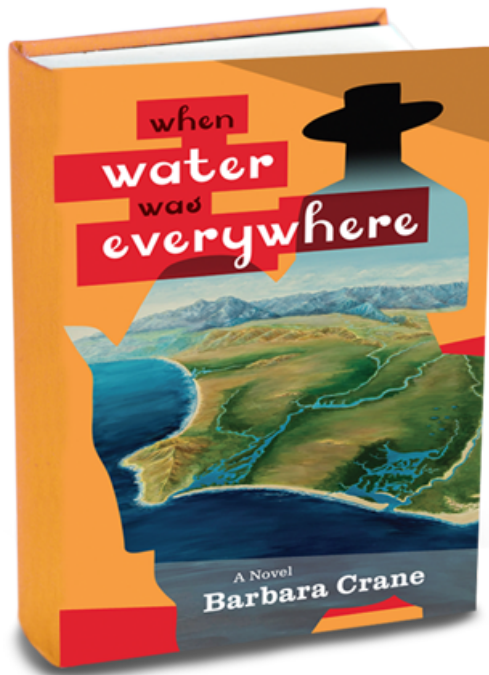
Set in what is now Long Beach and in the pueblo of Los Angeles, Crane's novel provides a vivid picture of the people who once lived here, their sorrows and their triumphs. American immigrants, Mexican Californios, Tongva/Gabrieleno Indians and Spanish padres come to life in her imaginative re-telling of California's Mexican era. As the novel unfolds, its themes of loss, hope and redemption resonate from every page.

When Water Was Everywhere is particularly timely as Southern California's drought approaches its fifth year. Readers will visit life in Los Angeles before concrete and rebar covered the land. They will appreciate the importance of the Los Angeles River in the growth of a metropolis and experience the tumultuous years prior to California's statehood.

Barbara Crane is a novelist, journalist and teacher. Her work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Sun* magazine and other publications. Her first novel, *The Oldest Things in the World*, won the Silver Medal award from ForeWord magazine. She reported for the Long Beach Business Journal for five years. Barbara lives in Long Beach, California with her husband and family.



end



When Water Was Everywhere

by Barbara Crane

Historical Fiction

Paperback ISBN – 978-0-9972609-0-8

Ebook ISBN – 978-0-9972609-1-5

350 pages

Retail price \$18.00

Published by Lagoon House Press, 2016

Available online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble
on June 1, 2016

Once upon a time in Los Angeles, water was everywhere—in rivers that rendered the vast plain a marsh; in underground streams that provided an abundance of water for people, cattle and crops. This is the lush landscape that the young Henry Scott encounters when he arrives in the Pueblo of Los Angeles during the waning days of Mexican rule. In this fertile place along the Los Angeles River, Scott's fortunes begin to change. His story is intertwined with the story of a wealthy rancher (inspired by the historical figure John Temple) who will change life in California forever; with the story of a determined Tongva Indian woman, Big Headed Girl, who Scott comes to love; and with the story of Padre José, a Franciscan friar who embodies the brutality of the mission system, yet tenderly cultivates the fragile beauty of his beloved California passion flower.

As these stories unfold and converge, Barbara Crane's precise and lyrical prose, and her deft interweaving of historical fact and human drama, make for the richest of fictional tapestries — both epic and intimate in scale, infused with a sense of loss, but also with hard-won hope and the possibility of redemption.

An excerpt

Henry Scott bent double over his saddle. His eyes were closed, his face nearly hidden by his broad-brimmed hat. His body swayed precariously. The horse he rode looked no sturdier than he, a beast so devoid of flesh, it nearly appeared transparent.

A few people walked by on the road. Scott didn't notice. They glanced sideways at the horse, blinking once, twice, at the man's size, at the animal's withered body. Stilling their usual "buenas tardes," a greeting that came easily to their lips, they looked away. Though Scott could barely keep his seat, he appeared formidable, a tall man engulfed by a long horsehide coat, far too warm for a late September day.

Scott rode on. His horse kicked up small puffs of dust as it moved forward toward the pueblo of Los Angeles, tracking a straight line, as if it knew where it was going. To the north, mountains presided over a wide green basin, a gift of the rivers that ambled along the land in the dry season and thundered from mountain passes during heavy rains. The path stretched before him, dry and dusty—the rainy season wasn't upon them yet. He had risked his life to ride across the continent. He knew little about the weather or the people here. If asked, he would have said, "I know nothing about nothing," a man who gave himself no credit for the things he did know.

The presence of a horse and rider on his left side roused Scott from his stupor. He kept his eyes fixed on his pommel.

"Don Rodrigo Tilman," the man said. "A sus ordenes."

At the sound of the man's voice, the horse stumbled, throwing Scott off balance. He righted himself and looked at Tilman. He saw a man well over twice his age and half his size. The older man wore a dark suit, like one a judge might wear in St. Louis, the last city that had seen Scott's back. His hat, though, was unfamiliar. Not the tall beaver hat a distinguished St. Louis gentleman would wear. It was, instead, wide-brimmed, made of leather and adorned with silver medallions around its flat crown. Scott couldn't tell whether the man was an American or a Mexican.

"You are going to the pueblo?" Tilman asked in unaccented English.

"Yes." Scott fixed his gaze on the pommel again. His size made his horse appear even more fragile than it was.

"And you are doing...?"

Scott couldn't answer this question. His reasons for traveling so far would take more breath than he had to explain. Night would come upon them soon. He was either going to have to bed down off the road or find a place to sleep in town.

He took a deep breath. "Anyroomsintown?"

Tilman showed no surprise at the man's quick rush of words. "Not many, señor. My man is off buying horses from one of the ranches. You can have his bed in the barn for a night or two."

Scott nodded yes.

"I'm going to ride ahead then. In a mile or so, you'll pass the plaza church. I live in a whitewashed house a little farther on. Go round back to the barn. Think you can find it?"

Another nod.

"Good." Tilman nudged his horse on with his spurs. The horse had barely started off before Tilman turned halfway around to face Scott again.

"I assume you're going to look for work?" Tilman didn't wait for an answer. "Come round to my office in the morning. Down the street from the barn. Above the store. Early." Each word was precise, each thought conveyed with purpose, all lost on Scott. He was thinking of hay—for his horse to eat, for him to lie on.

Tilman turned toward the pueblo once again and this time rode away.

Scott was too tired to be grateful. So tired he wasn't sure he could ride the short distance to Tilman's barn. A fragment of the Catholic Mass repeated itself in his head: "Ave Maria, gratia plena," Hail Mary, full of grace. Because he had heard the chant in a church he rarely entered, he didn't remember any other words, only the sighs of the hundred or so souls who were afraid enough of hell that they woke early on a Sunday morning when they could have used the sleep.

He crossed the Río de Porciúncula, which flowed out of the valley northwest of the pueblo. He passed the Zanja Madre, the Mother Ditch, an aqueduct dug forty years earlier to bring water from the river to the pueblo's small band of settlers. Past grape vines planted by an early French arrival and fields scattered here and there over the landscape.

The pueblo's settlement of humble buildings had looked small from a distance and not much larger as he drew closer. People stopped what they were doing, glanced up at him. Their complexions were darker than his. Mexicans. And darker. Indians. Africans. He had seen all their kind on the trail. In St. Louis, too, where people were more often the pale color of Englishmen. He knew he couldn't converse with any of them. Ignorant of Spanish, he had his mother to thank for schooling him in proper English, though her native tongue was French. He averted his eyes, wishing he could be as invisible as he felt; his hands clutched the reins more tightly than necessary.

By and by, he came to the pueblo's center. Two men pulled a large cart, empty, through the square. Women converged on the church. Dark shawls covered their heads; they looked like shadows in the dusk. A few children played on the steps. Scott made his way past the plaza at the same dogged pace he had kept for two thousand miles. One-story buildings, most of them the color of earth, flanked the road. Dust swirled around him as a wind rose. Warm. September. Evening. Wind. This is how he'd remember his first evening in the pueblo of Los Angeles.

Testimonials

When Water Was Everywhere is a finely-crafted historical novel in which landscape functions not as background, but as a potent force which both shapes and is shaped by those who occupy the lands that we now know as southern California. Crane's broad canvas shows Anglos, indigenous peoples, and Spanish settlers in conflict and sometimes in concord during the era of colonization; it is a tribute to her artistry that while she does not turn away from the horrors of this era, she brings deep empathy to all her characters.

Anne Finger, author of Call Me Ahab, Winner of the Prairie Schooner Prize for Fiction

Set in California in the early days of El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles, and where Rancho Los Cerritos still sits today as a museum, this tale brings to life compelling, and believable characters living and struggling to find their place in the melding of cultures of this time. Barbara Crane has skillfully woven the often conflicting interests of these characters in such a way that it will give the reader a fascination for a period of California history that most of us have forgotten.

Landes Bell, Past President of the Board of Friends of Rancho Los Cerritos

This is a novel of Los Angeles set in the 1840s, when it was a village. Throughout the story, the waters run with little interruption, as three cultures meet in conflict and occasional harmony. The characters, Anglo, Mexican/Spanish and Indian, move within and outside their spheres in widening circles, subject to the land in which they seek to survive and prosper.

Here is the Los Angeles basin before the American conquest, a portrait of the land and the people painted in brilliant colors. The author has taken great pains to depict the lives touched by this clash of cultures, showing the emotions, environment and manmade objects woven carefully and accurately into a tense and very readable novel. *When Water Was Everywhere* provides rare insight for readers who want to understand the growing pains of the pueblo, village and rancho.

Steve Iverson, Historical Curator, Rancho Los Cerritos Historic Site, Long Beach (ret.)

Q&A WITH BARBARA CRANE

Where did you get the idea for the story?

The novel *When Water Was Everywhere* emerged from days of crisscrossing the Los Angeles Basin by automobile—sometimes putting 15,000 to 20,000 miles a year on my car in the course of my work as an independent writer and corporate trainer. As I crossed overpasses high above the land, I often turned north toward the soaring transverse range. Known in our time as the San Gabriel Mountains, they ring the Los Angeles Basin. I wondered, “What did the first people on this land think about living in the shadow of these magnificent mountains?”

I crossed over the Los Angeles River, saw it encased in its concrete channel, and wondered what the rivers looked like when they ran freely. I drove along the coast and imagined the ships full of adventurers, explorers and holy men who came to California as early as the 16th century, changing the landscape, people and culture forever. I began to infuse my imaginings with the people who lived here when Los Angeles was a pueblo. Those people—a few Mexican and fewer American settlers, the indigenous Tongva Indians, and the Spanish missionaries people my novel. All these wanderings coalesced into the novel *When Water Was Everywhere*.

Why a book about the Los Angeles river basin? What motivated you to write it?

I wanted people to see the Los Angeles basin the way I was able to envision it as a result of my research—verdant, alive, heavily forested in some areas, a maze of wetlands throughout the year. I wanted them to envision a Los Angeles River that can be restored as a place of refuge from the city, an environmental help instead of a concrete drainage ditch. We have to be safe from floods, of course, but we have gained a lot of knowledge since the Army Corps of Engineers gave us the concrete sarcophagus we’ve known for nearly a century—and usually ignore—as the Los Angeles River. I wanted people to be able to see, as I do now, a Los Angeles that exists below the concrete and rebar.

Is this a true story?

When Water Was Everywhere is historical fiction. It’s a novel, that is, a story. Although the story as a whole is fiction, most of it is historically accurate because it is based on more than a decade of research. I delved into the history of the pueblo of Los Angeles and the lives of the Tongva/Gabrieleno Indians as they would have lived in the early 1840s. I researched how life was lived by the padres and the Indians at the California missions, specifically the Mission San Gabriel. I especially enjoyed diving into the history of our two historic ranchos in Long Beach, particularly Rancho Los Cerritos, where a good deal of the action in the novel takes place.

Are the characters based on anyone real?

One of the four major characters is inspired by John Temple, the wealthy businessman and owner of the first store in the pueblo of Los Angeles. Don Juan Temple, as he was called, bought a part of the original Nieto land grant that borders the Los Angeles River on the west and, today, the San Gabriel River on the east. Today, those 325,000 acres that constituted the Nieto land grant have become seven cities. John Temple purchased Rancho Los Cerritos, which comprised 27,000 acres of the Nieto grant in 1843. Much of the action in *When Water Was Everywhere* takes place as Temple's (named Rodrigo Tilman in the novel) ranch house was being constructed.

If it's not real, why is the story important?

I think that when a person makes a connection to the land where they live, they appreciate their surroundings more fully. I've lived in the Los Angeles area—near Wilshire Boulevard's Miracle Mile in Los Angeles as a child, in Long Beach for nearly 40 years as an adult—and never paid much attention to my physical surroundings. I noticed houses and office buildings. It was only when I was in my 30s and began to hike in the San Gabriel Mountains or looked out at the ocean that I got a feeling for nature.

When the natural world intersects with history, there is a context with which to consider nature. Nature is more than a tree or a park. It's an interconnected web of human beings, animals and plants of all species. *When Water Was Everywhere* reminds us that the land looked different one hundred eighty years ago, that we've gone a long way toward obliterating those natural features that made this area unique. But we can see these features again when we read the book and appreciate the lives of the people who first lived here, be they Tongva/Gabrieleno, Mexican Californio or American immigrant.

Why does Barbara Crane write?

I've written for as long as I can remember. I began as a child with a diary and slowly gravitated toward a short flirtation with writing poetry, then memoir for a time. I found writing to be the most fun and most challenging when I began to write fiction. I've written two novels and many short stories. I write because I'd rather spend a day writing than do anything else.

When you aren't writing, who do you read?

I read fiction, mainly, and poetry. In the last few years, I've enjoyed quite a bit of nonfiction also. My favorite novel is Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I've read it nine times. I love Toni Morrison, Gabriel García Márquez, Nadine Gordimer, Jonathan Franzen, Jhumpa Lahiri. Holly Prado Northrup, Louise Glück and W.S. Merwin are some of my favorite poets. I read a lot of books that were written by writers all over the world: Japan, Africa, Nepal, Costa Rica, Mexico. I want to know about other places and other people. I think that books are a good way to know them.

Is *When Water Was Everywhere* appropriate for my teenager to read?

I think *When Water Was Everywhere* is appropriate for a teenager to read. There are a few mentions of sex, but nothing heavy handed or explicit, no “sex scenes.” Henry Scott, one of the main characters, has been beaten regularly by his father, and it takes a toll on him. Although I tell about his travails, the story doesn’t dwell on cruelty or violence. I’d love to see young people read this novel, because I think it gives them a perspective on the land and the people who once lived here. The Tongva/Gabrieleno still live here, by the way. There are many people living in Southern California today who can trace their ancestry to the Tongva.

Where can I buy *When Water Was Everywhere*?

You can buy the book on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com, available June 1, 2016. It’s available as a paperback or an e-book. You can also link to the book directly through my website, www.whenwaterwaseverywhere.com or through my publisher’s website, www.lagoonhousepress.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Barbara Crane has always lived off her skills with the written word -- as a freelance journalist, a business writer, corporate trainer, consultant and technical writer. After leaving a successful career in education in the late 1970s, she co-created CraneMorley, a Long Beach training company that grew to encompass a large client base which included the major automakers in Southern California and Fortune 500 companies from all industries. Later she focused on news, magazine and corporate writing assignments as well as teaching writing within corporations.

But her words were not just a way to earn a living. When the work day was done, Barbara would often be found at her desk at home where she wrote short stories, creative nonfiction, journal pieces, brief memoirs of travel to Peru, Japan, France, Britain, Tanzania,

India, Nepal, Costa Rica, Canada and the 40 or more American cities she visited during the course of her work or with family. She has published fiction and creative non-fiction in newspapers and literary magazines, sometimes winning prizes. She also wrote two novels. *The Oldest Things in the World* was published in 2001 and won a Silver Medal award from ForeWord magazine, and *When Water Was Everywhere* which has just been published by Lagoon House Press.

“Writing gives meaning and purpose to my life,” says Barbara. But she is quick to point out that she has a number of other passions. She is concerned about the rights of indigenous people, worldwide. She loves to hike and to cook (not at the same time!). I enjoy cultivating a drought-resistant garden. She loves to spend time with good friends, to visit art and cultural museums and centers wherever she goes. She is continually fascinated by people, the lives we make for ourselves, the challenges we face and the people we love. Barbara lives in Long Beach California with her husband and family.

*Barbara Crane graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a major in history and a minor in English. Among her awards and commendations are ForeWord Magazine’s silver medal for fiction in 2002 for her novel, **The Oldest Things in the World**, an Award of Excellence in Writing from the Society of Technical Communication, an international professional organization, and the Torch Award for Outstanding Service by the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Society of Training and Development.*
