

Michele Zack, author of “*Altadena: Between Wilderness and City*”

Author Bio: Zack lives in and works from her Altadena home and has been a writer/journalist for 25 years. In the 1980s and 90s, she contributed many articles to The Pasadena Weekly. She is currently a contributor to *Far Eastern Economic Review* and former *AsiaWeek* correspondent from Thailand and California. The author of a popular ethnography of a wandering hill tribe in Southeast Asia and co-author of *Fieldings Guide to Thailand*, Zack has written widely about business and culture in Southeast Asia, and worked as speechwriter for more than one Thai Prime Minister. She is a guest lecturer on these subjects at USC’s Marshall School of Business, a member of the Altadena Town Council and Land Use Committee, and chair of the Watershed Committee. She is also currently working with Altadena Foothills Conservancy and Art Center College of Design on an historical dramatic film on the life of Benjamin Eaton, the pioneer who first developed area water sources and led the Indiana Colonists as founding president of the San Gabriel Orange Grove Association. She has recently also begun work on a new history of Sierra Madre.

About the Book: A new social history by Michele Zack was launched late last spring by the Altadena Historical Society. The book’s scope reaches beyond the small unincorporated community of Altadena, and will be of particular interest to Pasadena as well: it explores the relationship between the two places from their beginnings through the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s. The story of how Pasadena’s redevelopment and freeway construction affected racial change in Altadena, as well how court-ordered integration of Pasadena Unified School District reverberates for today’s public school students is engagingly told for the first time in an authoritative way. *Altadena: Between Wilderness and City* is a 240-page book with over 250 photos and illustrations, many of which have not been previously published. It is a lavish 9.5 X 11 inch production. Altadena Historical Society raised funds for this project, enabling its author Michele Zack to conduct research in a completely independent way, free from any pressure from Chamber of Commerce types or "sponsors" guiding or interfering with her scholarship.

Here’s what Kevin Starr, California State Librarian and Author of America and the California Dream Series says about Altadena’s new history:

“Altadena: Between Wilderness and City is urban history at its best. In each aspect of her story-whether it be people, politics, architecture, water, environment, social development, or the fair housing crisis-Michele Zack pays her subject the tribute of extensive research, vigorous narrative, and the fullest possible honesty. Not only does Michele Zack tell the lively story of Altadena in an encompassing and vibrant way, she places that story in its most complete regional and national context. If we had only this one history to guide us, we could significantly recreate the history of Southern California in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a mecca for millions seeking a better life in the Southland. This is history as written by a writer of insight who knows that Altadena-as place, city, reality, and dream-encompasses the range and richness of American life.” —Dr. Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California