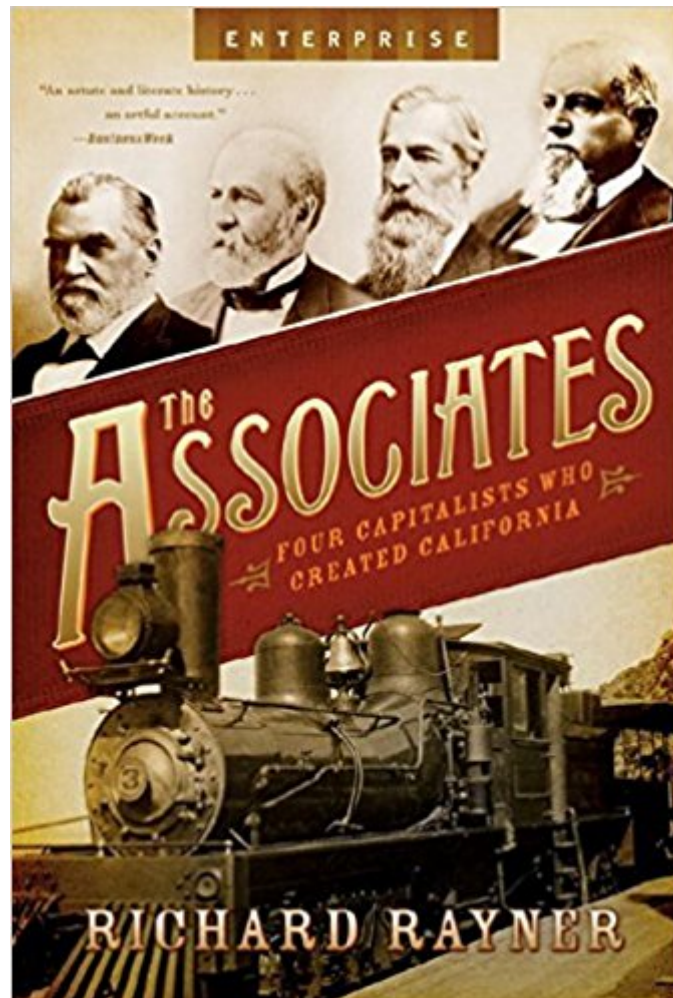




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# The Associates: Four Capitalists Who Created California (Enterprise)



## Synopsis

"A first-rate look at the little-known story behind the creation of America's first continental railroad" —*Entertaining and well written.*" —*Publishers Weekly* One hundred forty years ago, four shopkeepers in Sacramento, California, rose to become the force behind the American transcontinental railroad, achieving along the way wealth beyond measure. To build influence and maintain power, they lied, bribed, and, when necessary, arranged for obstacles, both human and legal, to disappear. Their names were Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins, and they were known as "The Big Four" or "The Associates." Their drive for money — nothing more, nothing less — was epic. Their legacy is a university, public gardens, museums, mansions, banks, and libraries — and to a large degree, California itself. A captivating chronicle of a crucial period in American urban expansion, *The Associates* is a true-to-life tale of ruthless ambition, staggering greed, and the making of a nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Novelist and nonfiction author Rayner (*The Devil's Wind*) provides a first-rate look at the little-known story behind the creation of America's first continental railroad — the story of Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins and Leland Stanford, founder of the university that bears his name. The associates were unscrupulous, savvy profiteers, whose motives were driven solely by a lust for riches and whose success usually came at the expense of others. After usurping

engineer Theodore Judah's campaign to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific, the foursome capitalized on anti-Chinese sentiment, hiring desperate Chinese to do hazardous work in inhumane conditions for substandard wages. They later sanctioned murder yet successfully painted themselves as philanthropists thanks to the journalists and historians in their pockets. Amid a story of greed and ruthlessness, Rayner offers a fascinating glimpse into the growth of the U.S., illustrating how these determined if ruthless men revolutionized transportation and greatly influenced the expansion of California. The author claims their business acumen defined the nature of the modern corporation, and their legacies live on in a library, a university, art galleries and museums. Entertaining and well written, Rayner's book will appeal to readers interested in history as well as business. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“An astute and literate history”  
“an artful account.” - BusinessWeek

good subject matter for the book but way too much political correctness to be good history. Author spends half of his time pointing out how in modern California one thing or another about the Associations' was awful covering up much of the story. This may be as good as we get for 19th century California history today when authors hide the story to show how politically correct they are. Too bad it is really a good story if it just was allowed to be told.

Interesting history of Central Pacific Railroad construction. The graft and corruption ran deep for both CPRR and UPRR executives and US Congressmen. All in effort to make American Great. Sounds familiar with Trump Administration.

A compelling and concise history of the California railroad. One realizes that Private capital would never have been able to build the railroad. There was much financial slight-of-hand, and only a few got really rich, but the transcontinental railroad was only made possible due to govt grants and thusly it (like the Erie canal) was really a public works program, albeit a very corrupt program. But in spite of the corruption the program benefited the nation greatly. I found myself with an odd fondness for Mr Huntington, the most tyrannical of the associates. Unlike Stanford, Huntington had no pretenses about who or what he was. He worked long hours ever night at having absolute control and he did it better than anyone else. He made things happen, he willed the railroad thru the mountains. I don't believe he was in it for the money, and I know he wasn't in it for the fame....he

was simply driven to dream and in so doing he changed the nation. He was so bad, he was good. One review snobbishly slights this book because of a blunder here or there, and for overquoting. This misses the forest for the trees; If you want a great, quick, entertaining and educational read about early California this is the book for you.

This book is an outstanding history of most important time in California. The building of the transcontinental railroad from the Capitalist business perspective. The author does an excellent job in writing this book from a neutral position. The book is well written and very informative.

This was a good read. It is more of a light read than a detailed study. You will not find a great deal of information but if you are looking for an overview it is worth the time.

I'm fairly familiar with these men and their lives and accomplishments, but I learned a lot of new stuff. The book is very well written to be easy to read and absorb. I think it gave fair treatment to some controversial characters.

I have lived in Northern California for forty years and knew the Big Four - Crocker, Hopkins, Huntington, and Hopkins - were instrumental in creating the transcontinental railroad and all became fabulously wealthy in the process. But like many who live here, I knew very little about the nature of their involvement and the true source of their wealth. Since Silicon Valley was not around in the latter half of the 1800s, I knew their wealth creation story had to be different than what we see today. Author Richard Rayner in his "The Associates: Four Capitalists Who Created California" does a masterful job in chronicling the story of "the building of the railroad, the creation of a state, and the invention of big business" and how these four became "as fabulously wealthy as anybody in American history." This is a story of about bent laws, broken rivals, the bribery of government officials (local, state, and federal), and sanctioned murder. Collis Huntington, the eventual ring-leader, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Leland Stanford all met while running successful retail and wholesale businesses in Sacramento. They were drawn into the idea of building a transcontinental railroad by Theodore Judah who was the visionary but desperately needed money. They provided the initial stake then assumed control after Judah, attempting to find capital to buy out his financial partners, died unexpectedly. Rayner's well researched story then focuses on the building of the first transcontinental railroad - "a legendary story, a central part of the American West's creation myth"...a triumph of will, guts, the American can-do spirit, murder, fraud, and

corruption "over unimaginable difficulty and danger"... "a race between the Irish navies of the Union Pacific, laying track from the east, and the Chinese coolies of the Central Pacific, advancing from the west...built by men who cared only about money and were absolutely ruthless about money"...a story of lust for money that propelled the railroad over the mountains, through the deserts, across the plains. By the end of the Associates' run, "the railroads - the way they run and the power they had - were regarded as corrupt, cruel, implacable, and fiendish, in stark contrast to the gratitude and excitement with which they'd been greeted thirty years before." This is a great read for anyone living in the Golden State, for those interested in the history of the "wild west," or anyone wanting to understand the birth of big business and the eventual demand for big government to control monopolists. Now when I visit Stanford University, the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, Grace Cathedral (Crocker), or the Mark Hopkins Hotel, I will be brought back to this book and what these landmarks represent in California's history.

Very enlightening!

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