



“*Towers of Gold* is a vivid portrait of the financier who changed California forever...a masterly crafted biography...you’ll never see downtown Los Angeles or San Francisco’s financial district in quite the same way again.”

- Julia Flynn Siler, Author of *The House of Mondavi*

TOWERS OF GOLD **HOW ONE JEWISH IMMIGRANT** **NAMED ISAIAS HELLMAN** **CREATED CALIFORNIA** Frances Dinkelspiel

A brilliant entrepreneur and financier whose tenacity was tested in the wild and dusty frontier of gold-rush era Los Angeles, Isaias Wolf Hellman was one of the most influential individuals in the history of early California. Integral to the expansion of Wells Fargo Bank, the establishment of the University of Southern California and the financing of the burgeoning oil industry, Hellman’s meteoric rise from store clerk to the upper echelons of society is chronicled in Frances Dinkelspiel’s meticulously researched biography, *TOWERS OF GOLD: How One Jewish Immigrant Named Isaias Hellman Created California* (St. Martin’s Press: \$29.95; November, 2008).

A beacon of hope amidst the crushing religious oppression of nineteenth century Bavaria, California lured Hellman with the promise of religious acceptance and wealth. Arriving in Los Angeles at the age of sixteen, Hellman discovered a town that was little more than a cluster of adobe buildings and home to fewer than 4,400 people. Within 10 years Hellman founded the city’s first bank, eventually known as the Farmers and Merchants Bank, which proved to be an endeavor that would eventually turn him into one of the wealthiest men in California.

Hellman’s influence extended beyond the exclusive and moneyed corridors of various financial establishments to the cultural institutions that would cement Los Angeles’ reputation as one of the country’s premier cities. Vital to the resurrection of the financially troubled *Los Angeles*

Times as well as the founding of the city's transportation system and the state's oil industry, Hellman's expectations for Los Angeles were nothing short of visionary.

Also a resident of San Francisco, Hellman resurrected the storied Nevada Bank founded by the fabled Silver Kings and started the Union Trust Company; both of which would later be merged into the Wells Fargo Bank. Establishing institutions like these have assured Hellman's legacy as a permanent fixture in the fabric of California's financial and intellectual histories.

In **TOWERS OF GOLD**, Dinkelspiel takes us from early Los Angeles as it emerged into a bustling metropolis, to the birth of the Southern Pacific railway line, to the creation of major finance centers in San Francisco. With illuminating biographical insight she explores one of the most interesting figures in California's history and one of the most exciting generations in the history of the United States.

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TOWERS OF GOLD

How One Jewish Immigrant Named Isaias Hellman Created California

Frances Dinkelspiel

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Frances Dinkelspiel is an award-winning journalist and the great-great granddaughter of Isaias Hellman. Her work has appeared in, *The New York Times*, *People*, *The San Jose Mercury News*, *San Francisco Magazine* and other venues. She lives in Berkeley, California.