
David D. Van Tassel
This volume is the latest in a wave of encyclopedic treatments of urban histories that have appeared over the past decade, beginning with The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History (1987), The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (1994), and The Encyclopedia of New York City (1995). All differed in details of format but are similar in breadth of coverage which, if the trend continues, will make it possible to do comparative studies of urban developments.

Los Angeles: A to Z is a handsomely designed volume with over 300 black-and-white illustrations, just under 2000 articles, appendices, maps, a bibliography for further reading, a chronology, and even a select list of films about Los Angeles. The articles range from topical overviews on such subjects as agriculture and architecture, ethnic groups and earthquakes, censuses, to individual cities; key sources under articles, particularly to manuscript collections, public documents and reports — all would ease access to the rich materials in this volume.

Los Angeles: A to Z is, nevertheless, a great achievement, a boon to citizens of Los Angeles, and will hold its own with the small but growing collection of metropolitan encyclopedias.

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During the middle decades of the nineteenth century when Italians talked about opera, their first thoughts frequently centered on the quality and dynamics of the human voice. For Germans, caught up in the excitement of Wagnerian music drama, it was the orchestration and the multilayered nature of the symphonic underpinning that captured the public imagination. But in France, despite the presence and success of theatres performing Italian and German operas, not to mention the Opéra Com-