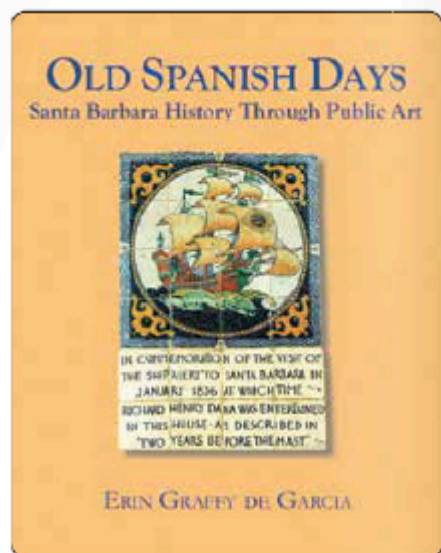


SB Book Review

by Cheri Rae

Old Spanish Days

How lucky we are in Santa Barbara to still have in our midst a cadre of intrepid individuals who care about our origins, who understand our underpinnings, and who are willing to dedicate their time, talent in treasure in telling the stories of this very special place.



Erin Graffy de Garcia's new book provides artistic insight and historical perspective

Such is the case with the talented woman-about-town **Erin Graffy de Garcia**, who has recently released her newest book, *Old Spanish Days: Santa Barbara's History Through Public Art*.

The prolific Santa Barbara author got to play "history detective," as she terms it, in the creation of this book. She hunted down the backstories and did some impressive research about incredible art in our midst – that we may well take for granted in our daily lives.

The reader pages through in wonderment, with the realization of seeing these semi-familiar tiles, murals, medallions, friezes, sculptures, and paintings that reveal the rest of the story



Cheri Rae



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Cheri Rae is the senior editor and columnist for sbview.com. Known for her civic activism and insightful chronicles of the local scene, Cheri has a hard-won reputation for writing about issues that other Santa Barbara-based writers are reluctant to tackle.

to the artistic sights depicting our city's history that we see all around us but may forget to notice. Each section is filled with the sense of "I've seen that, but never knew anything about it."

Our historic public art is where you find it, and thanks to the author's sleuthing, the reader is treated to views, as she writes, "where you least expect it: a public space, a restaurant, or even an office building is likely to blossom forth with some vestige of history preserved on a canvas, painted on a wall, flashed in a weathervane, captured in a tile, mural, or enshrined in a frieze on a courtyard cave."

The combination of Graffy de Garcia's sparkling writing style, the excellent photos by **Fritz Olenberger**, and the clean graphic design by **Anna Lafferty** allows the art to take center stage. It is complemented by history lessons, and even insights about the individual artists whose work decorate and commemorate our city and its unique past.

This labor of love is like a Valentine to Santa Barbara – and Santa Barbarans. Come to think of it, what a thoughtful and appropriate gift it would be on Saturday, February 14, for all those who love Santa Barbara, its romance, beauty and historic legacy.