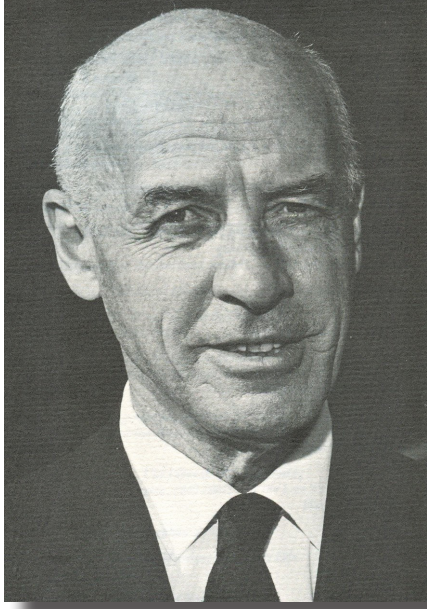


## John W. Caughey (1902-1995)



Born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1902, John Caughey graduated with honors from the University of Texas in 1923 and then attended the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied the history of the Spanish Borderlands under Herbert Eugene Bolton. Soon after earning his Ph.D. in 1928, he began teaching at UCLA in 1930, where he focused his teaching and writing on the history of California and the West. Among his many publications were *A History of the Pacific Coast* (1933) and *California* (1940). His *Gold is the Cornerstone* (1948) was later reprinted in 1975 as *The California Gold Rush*.

Caughey served as an editor of the *Pacific Historical Quarterly* from 1937 to 1968. There he contributed to significant developments in the field of western history, including promoting an emphasis on the 20th-century West. In 1972, his colleagues in the Western History Association recognized his prolific and path breaking work by electing him as their president. Later, the WHA created an annual award in his honor, the prestigious Caughey prize for the best book on

the history of the American West.

Caughey was also known for his support of civil liberties and civil rights. In 1950, when the University of California required loyalty oaths of its faculty, Caughey refused, arguing that such oaths violated academic freedom. For this, he was fired. He took action, joining others in pursuing legal measures to get their jobs back. They won their case, and, by 1954, Caughey was allowed to resume his teaching duties at UCLA. He remained there until his retirement in 1970. The experience inspired him to increase his involvement in the American Civil Liberties Union and to write about the danger of academic censorship in his 1958 book, *In Clear and Present Danger: The Crucial State of Our Freedoms*.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Caughey and his wife, LaRee, published works about racially segregated education in Los Angeles. His most important publication, *To Kill a Child's Spirit: The Tragedy of School Segregation in the Los Angeles Schools*, appeared in 1973. He also collaborated with John Hope Franklin and Ernest May in 1966 to write *Land of the Free: A History of the United States*, an eighth grade textbook that was an early effort to produce a multicultural social history for K-12 students. Caughey was a member of the Congress of Racial Equality, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the United Civil Rights Council.

John W. Caughey died on December 15, 1995, in Lexington, Massachusetts, at the age of 93.

### Sources:

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