



Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940 (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books)

William Robbins

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Landscapes of Promise is the first comprehensive environmental history of the early years of a state that has long been associated with environmental protection. Covering the period from early human habitation to the end of World War II, William Robbins shows that the reality of Oregon's environmental history involves far more than a discussion of timber cutting and land-use planning.

Robbins demonstrates that ecological change is not only a creation of modern industrial society. Native Americans altered their environment in a number of ways, including the planned annual burning of grasslands and light-burning of understory forest debris. Early Euro-American settlers who thought they were taming a virgin wilderness were merely imposing a new set of alterations on an already modified landscape.

Beginning with the first 18th-century traders on the Pacific Coast, alterations to Oregon's landscape were closely linked to the interests of global market forces. Robbins uses period speeches and publications to document the increasing commodification of the landscape and its products. "Environment melts before the man who is in earnest," wrote one Oregon booster in 1905, reflecting prevailing ways of thinking.

In an impressive synthesis of primary sources and historical analysis, Robbins traces the transformation of the Oregon landscape and the evolution of our attitudes toward the natural world.

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