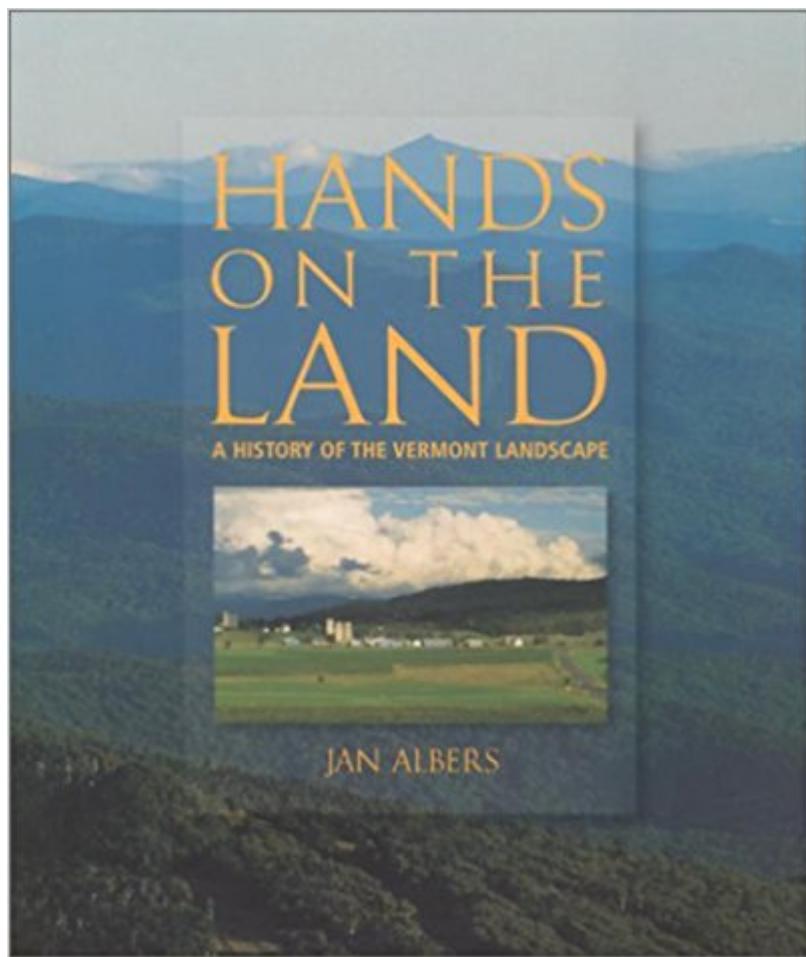


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Hands On The Land: A History Of The Vermont Landscape



Synopsis

In this book Jan Albers examines the history -- natural, environmental, social, and ultimately human -- of one of America's most cherished landscapes: Vermont. Albers shows how Vermont has come to stand for the ideal of unspoiled rural community, examining both the basis of the state's pastoral image and the equally real toll taken by the pressure of human hands on the land. She begins with the relatively light touch of Vermont's Native Americans, then shows how European settlers -- armed with a conviction that their claim to the land was "a God-given right" -- shaped the landscape both to meet economic needs and to satisfy philosophical beliefs. The often turbulent result: a conflict between practical requirements and romantic ideals that has persisted to this day. Making lively use of contemporary accounts, advertisements, maps, landscape paintings, and vintage photographs, Albers delves into the stories and personalities behind the development of a succession of Vermont landscapes. She observes the growth of communities from tiny settlements to picturesque villages to bustling cities; traces the development of agriculture, forestry, mining, industry, and the influence of burgeoning technology; and proceeds to the growth of environmental consciousness, aided by both private initiative and governmental regulation. She reveals how as community strengthens, so does responsible stewardship of the land. Albers shows that like any landscape, the Vermont landscape reflects the human decisions that have been made about it -- and that the more a community understands about how such decisions have been made, the better will be its future decisions.

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Customer Reviews

The fascination of *Hands on the Land* lies in its beautifully orchestrated build-up to the Vermont of today. (Tom Hotaling, *Architecture Boston*) Jan Alber's provocative book walks the reader through the fascinating geography and history of Vermont. Throughout, she artfully captures the events contributing to the shaping of the land, thus giving a history of the people and communities who have creatively lived and worked against the backdrop of one of the most remarkable and gently preserved landscapes in the world. (Thomas P. Salmon, Governor of Vermont, 1973-1977, and President of the University of Vermont, 1991-1997) Jan Albers has captured the essence of Vermont, showing us how inextricably linked are its land, its people, and its way of life. In chronicling the changes time has brought to Vermont's land and economy, Albers prompts us to look anew at how inevitably the decisions of today will determine the Vermont of tomorrow. (Jean Hocker, President, *The Land Trust Alliance*) Jan Albers's wry, sympathetic portraits of immigrants, farmers, entrepreneurs, scientists, politicians, and eccentrics combine with a remarkable sequence of illustrations to make *Hands on the Land* feel like a family album for Vermont. This is a book of illuminations and delights. (John Elder, *Middlebury College*) The unique character and timeless appeal of Vermont are rooted largely in the look of the land itself. In *Hands on the Land*, Jan Albers offers a lively and insightful study of the geological factors, the social and economic trends, and -- perhaps most compelling -- the human dreams and schemes that have shaped the landscape and in the process made Vermont one of America's truly special places. (Richard Moe, President, *National Trust for Historic Preservation*) What an exciting book! Jan Albers is eloquent and expert. This is an important work both for its historical perspectives and considerable foresight. Opening it, I'm invariably absorbed. (Edward Hoagland, author of *Walking the Dead Diamond River*)

Jan Albers received her doctorate in history from Yale University. She has taught at Yale, the University of Sussex, and Middlebury and St. Michael's Colleges in Vermont.

This was something that I had to purchase for a Vt education class that I was taking at college. It turned out to be more interesting than I thought it would be. If you're a native to Vermont you should definitely take a gander at some of the old photos/history that are in this book.

We have had a camp in Vermont for years. Our neighbor has a copy of this book which I have just finished reading. I thought it would be an excellent book to have for people who visit us. This copy arrived in excellent condition plus having a handwritten note by the previous owner - which makes it

even more special.

This is such a wonderfully put together book. It's extremely well researched and filled with amazing photos. This is the kind of book that should be read by anyone concerned about "development," no matter where they live, because we all share the same issues. I, for one, live in Arkansas, and I would love it if Jan Albers wrote a similar book for my state. *Hands On The Land* is that good.

This is a fantastic book for those who love Vermont and the history of the land and environment. It's informative - has great photos and is just a joy to pick up at any time to take a browse. I highly recommended it.

This is a very beautiful book. The high quality of the paper, illustrations, and binding make it an artifact of almost art book quality. The text is a tad on the dull side - the story is told better in *Reflections Bullough's Pond* - but all in all this is a work that I am grateful to the author for writing and to the publisher for producing.

I had to buy this book for my college class on Vermont history. It was much cheaper on , then through my college's online book store! It is really a wonderful book, with amazing photography!

"Hands on the Land" takes topics such as ecology, forestry, geology, agricultural history, urban land planning, climate change, and local advocacy planning and mixes them up into a beautifully constructed history of the physical development of Vermont and the dangers it faces now and into the future. Funded by the family that owns the Vermont Country Store, this is an original book idea that is worth study and worth simply relishing, Your respect for what you see and experience In Vermont will likely deepen or change after you encounter this book.

This among the very few books I have experienced which combine exceptional beauty with information of urgent importance. As this volume indicates, no other state is lovelier than Vermont. Few others have a more interesting history. But as Lyman Orton correctly indicates in the Foreword, the reader can also "take away some lessons about what determines land use, and what economic, social, cultural, and environmental consequences land-use choices may have." The reader is then urged to become involved in her or his community's efforts "to define its future, while realizing that the future's scenarios are written by today's actions." True enough. What's at stake?

Examine the wealth of photographs provided in Chapter 1 and in subsequent chapters. Such natural beauty could indeed be compromised...as it has already been in so many other areas throughout the United States. By examining the almost 400-year history of the Vermont landscape, Chapters 2-5, Albers suggests that the values of the past can be betrayed by what is done (and not done) now. Thus can the future be pre-determined, for better or worse. To have "hands on the land" is to have the power to determine its fate. That is as true of neighborhoods in the inner-city as it is of villages in Vermont. All are communities at risk. Almost everyone will enjoy experiencing this beautiful as well as informative book. It is "must reading" for anyone involved in decisions which concern land use, and especially those decisions which have significant economic, social, cultural, and environmental consequences.

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