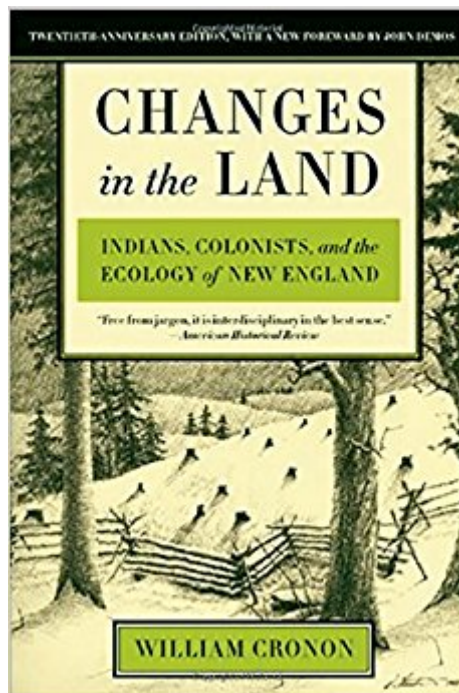




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Changes In The Land: Indians, Colonists, And The Ecology Of New England



Synopsis

The book that launched environmental history now updated. Winner of the Francis Parkman Prize in this landmark work of environmental history, William Cronon offers an original and profound explanation of the effects European colonists' sense of property and their pursuit of capitalism had upon the ecosystems of New England. Reissued here with an updated afterword by the author and a new preface by the distinguished colonialist John Demos, *Changes in the Land*, provides a brilliant inter-disciplinary interpretation of how land and people influence one another. With its chilling closing line, "The people of plenty were a people of waste," Cronon's enduring and thought-provoking book is ethno-ecological history at its best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I only picked this up in support of the author after I read a bit about his role in the recent Wisconsin protests and the repercussions he faced therefor. I didn't actually expect to like the book. It sounded like a dry, academic study of a topic I wasn't much interested in. I couldn't have been more wrong. This book is not only fascinating and illuminative of a much overlooked and misunderstood period in history, but it is also relevant to aspects of today's political and economic struggles. Admittedly, the book gets off to a slow start. The first section explores what we are able to know about New England ecology before and during the colonial period, and the limitations on how we know it. The first chapter of the second section is an exploration of the diversity of New England ecology, both between the general northern and southern regions, as well as among the various "patchworks" of ecological areas within the two regions. These sections form a necessary base for the remainder of

the book, but they are rather dry and academic. But beginning with the chapter "Seasons of Want and Plenty", Cronon gets into the real meat of his argument: the differences between the ways Indians vs. colonists used the land and the fundamental incompatibility of the two. I learned in school that the Indians had no system for surveying land, nor even a concept of land ownership. In fact, I learned, they didn't even believe land could be owned, and out of ignorance or for sport they would often sell the same parcel to different colonial groups, or to the same group multiple times. Cronon explodes the fallacy in that understanding.

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