

WHERE THE GREAT RIVER RISES: AN ATLAS OF

The Connecticut River Watershed in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Rebecca A. Brown, Editor,
Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2009. 263 pp.
paper, ISBN: 978-1-58465-765-1

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The central concern of this edited collection of thirty-six chapters written by thirty-nine contributors and skillfully edited by Rebecca Brown, the communications director for the Connecticut River Joint Commission — is a comprehensive coverage of the northern section of the Connecticut River encompassing the watershed area of Vermont and New Hampshire. The atlas comprises of more than 280 color photographs, fifty-one maps and a number of figures and tables. The high quality of the photos is matched by an excellent set of maps that are well designed, fully complementing the essay's explanations.

The book is divided into eight parts. Its coverage is almost equally split between the physical and the cultural landscapes of the river. The atlas follows a typical outline found in most geography texts. Topics such as the Physical Landscape, Climate and Weather, The River and Watershed, and The Natural Environment are dealt first, followed by the Human History of the Watershed, Current Watershed Patterns, Transportation and Energy, and Culture, Education, and Recreation. Most chapters are brief, however, very detailed in their content and liberally illustrated. At the end of each chapter, a brief bibliography guides the reader to further helpful reading materials.

In recent years much has been written about the Connecticut River. A recent, well received book by Braden (2009), replete of photographs of the entire length of the river, provides an impressive visual view of the river. Other publications describe the River from specific perspectives. Few of these contributions, however, are as comprehensive as they go in depth in their examination of the river. Though geographically limited to the Vermont and New Hampshire watershed region of the River, this atlas provides a comprehensive treatise of how the river fits in the context of the entire area.

There is an underlying unity to the book making it a valuable source to an intended multiplicity of readers in the deliberate attempt to interrelate the natural environment to the cultural environment and the effects each has on the other. These interconnections touched upon many of the kinds of issues that are being addressed by conservationists. It is important to note that this is the kind of book that can be used in the classroom equally to it being on a living room table to enjoy leisurely. The plethora of information is the kind of contribution to be sought over time. Though it reads easily, it also has the depth that may need further reading for a better understanding of specific topics. Though it includes theoretical lines of inquiry, many contribu-

tors also include practical explanations that can be duplicated in doable visits of short duration. In the classroom this book would be an important source for reading material and would complement other more comprehensive texts very well. The authors come from a large range of disciplines providing explanations that can easily be absorbed by the neophyte. This effort is truly multidisciplinary. For those interested in New England, rural landscapes and rivers, this is must reading!

The book fulfills its promise to be comprehensive in scope. It handles the physical landscape in context with photos that provides an explanation that can be associated with the historical, economic, demographic and social characteristics surrounding the River. Intertwined are discussions that examine the ecological change of the River over time. The improvement of the quality of life around the River over the past few decades does not escape explanation. Along the way one captures the variety of the flora and fauna that inhabits the region that overlooks the river.

As one further reads the atlas one discovers the evolving personalities of the River. From its natural layout portraying and describing the beauty of the valley created by the river as it flows southward, a reader quickly realizes the value of the Connecticut River in other ways. The manner of how it is used by farmers, studied by historians, the settlement patterns created by people that have settled the region over time is complemented by those that extract its resources and contrasted by those that use the river for recreational purposes. In the end, we are provided with a greater understanding of the River's sense of purpose and its value as a place to explore, enjoy and admire.

The bibliography at the end of the book, complementing the limited citations at the end of each chapter, is a rich collection of interdisciplinary sources that will be valuable for the beginning student as well as for the cognoscenti. This publication is an important contribution in that a wide range of previously published material is found together as a single resource.

References

Braden, A. ed. 2009. *The Connecticut River: A Photographic Journey into the Heart of New England*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.