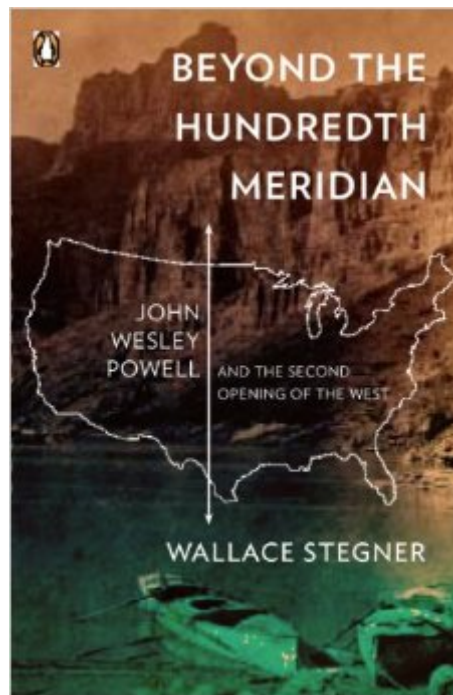


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Beyond The Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell And The Second Opening Of The West



Synopsis

In this book Wallace Stegner recounts the successes and frustrations of John Wesley Powell, the distinguished ethnologist and geologist who explored the Colorado River, the Grand Canyon, and the homeland of Indian tribes of the American Southwest. A prophet without honor who had a profound understanding of the American West, Powell warned long ago of the dangers economic exploitation would pose to the West and spent a good deal of his life overcoming Washington politics in getting his message across. Only now, we may recognize just how accurate a prophet he was. "This book goes far beyond biography, into the nature and soul of the American West. It is Stegner at his best, assaying an entire era of our history, packing his pages with insights as shrewd as his prose." —Ivan Doig

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This classic work is a penetrating and insightful study of the public career of Maj. John Wesley Powell, from the beginning of the Powell Survey, which most famously had Powell and his men descend for the first time by anyone the Colorado River, to his eventual ouster from the Geological Survey. Stegner does a magnificent job of detailing both the myriad accomplishments by Powell in his remarkable career as public servant, but the philosophy and ideas that undergirded his work. Most readers at the end will conclude that the history of the United States might have proceeded differently had his profound insights into the nature of the American West been heeded. Stegner writes in a lucid, clear, frequently exciting prose style. Although his history is solid, his writing is somewhat more. For example, at one point Stegner writes of one person who was more than a little

deluded about the nature of the West: "The yeasty schemes stirring in Adams' head must have generated gases to cloud his eyesight." Especially in context a brilliant sentence, and not of the quality one anticipates in a historical work, especially one that deals at length with questions of public policy. The volume also contains an Introduction by Stegner's mentor and teacher Bernard DeVoto, an essay that contains in a few pages the heart of DeVoto's own understanding of the West, and which alone would be worth the cost of the volume. Stegner does an excellent job of relating Powell's own insights and visions to those of others of the day. He contrasts Powell's philosophy with the desires and urges of the people who were rushing to obtain land in the West, and the politicians who were trying to lure them there.

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