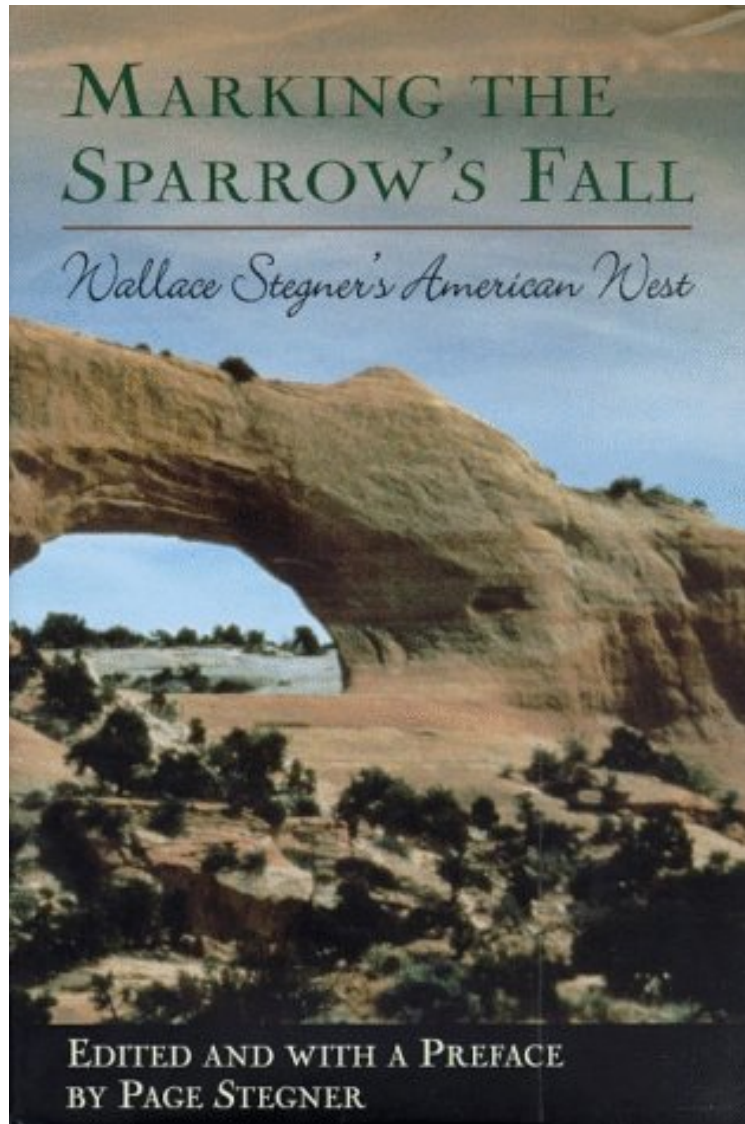


(Free download) Marking the Sparrow's Fall: Wallace Stegner's American West (A John Macrae Book)

## Marking the Sparrow's Fall: Wallace Stegner's American West (A John Macrae Book)

Wallace Earle Stegner  
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**Wallace Earle Stegner : Marking the Sparrow's Fall: Wallace Stegner's American West (A John Macrae Book)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marking the Sparrow's Fall: Wallace Stegner's American West (A John Macrae Book):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Marking the Sparrow's FallBy Catherine E. CrawfordMany of us feel we don't have enough time to read. One way to maximize the time we do have is to find an author skilled in

multiple writing fields. Wallace Stegner was an essayist, historian, environmental advocate, and fiction writer whose pen was at home in many genres. *Marking the Sparrow's Fall* is an essay collection that blends personal narrative, American (especially western) history, and environmental advocacy, with the skill of a good fiction writer. The book's first section "Home Ground" contains poignant but factual memoirs about Stegner's childhood spent hopping from one parched western town to the next with no chance to put roots down. On the subjects of aridity, orphaning, and rootlessness, Stegner was a pro. Essays in Section Two "Testimony" concern broader environmental and land use issues but are blessedly free of the arrogant self-righteous tone of much environmental writing. Stegner explains engagingly how we as Americans got from medieval Europe, where non aristocrats could not buy land, to Earth Day first celebrated in 1970. Stegner's famous "Wilderness Letter" is here; it argued for the idea of wilderness as a cornerstone of social health. Section Three "Inheritance" includes a stunning work called "The Twilight of Self Reliance," a tough-minded caring discussion of what's happened to the confidence settlers brought to America 200 years ago. It's as much a modern call to remember what we Americans try as a nation to be as it is a history lesson. The story "Genesis" that concludes the book puts the ideas of "Twilight" in a fictional frame. If you want a read that's rich, funny, alarming, optimistic, and sad--one that doesn't waste your time--this book is for you. Stegner's voice is one you can trust, and it's very much alive today. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. West is west By Stephen Taylor Wallace Stegner spent over fifty years writing and cranked out a tremendous amount of stuff -- fifteen novels, five histories, two biographies, plus hundreds of articles and short stories and occasional pieces. Consequently, much of this has not been republished. "Marking the Sparrow's Fall" is a new anthology edited by Stegner's son, Page, and a great introduction to all of his work. Uniquely, though, most of it is an unearthing of previously uncollected non-fiction. Stegner himself referred to these pieces as "junk" that he wrote to buy the groceries with, but I think we would all be hard-pressed to agree with him. His son comments in the preface that most of this writing remained uncollected simply because Stegner -- a tremendously busy man -- forgot about it. "None of it qualifies as 'grocery-buying junk'", Page notes, "... certainly not the humor of 'Why I Like the West,' wherein he insists that as a wild man from the West 'I have always done my best to live up to what tradition says I should be. I have always tried to look like Gary Cooper and talk like the Virginian. I have endeavored to be morally upright, courteous to women; with an innate sense of right and wrong but without the polish that Yale College or European travel might have put upon me. I have consented to be forgiven my frontier gaucheries, and I did not hold it against the waiter in the Parker House bar when he removed my feet from the upholstery." So here you'll find a handful of Stegner's better-known non-fiction -- two abridged chapters from "Wolf Willow", the "Wilderness Letter", and some other essays -- plus his famous short-story, "Genesis", the tale of an Englishman on the Saskatchewan frontier during the winter of 1906. But most of the book is made up of otherwise hard-to-find material, like his sketch, "Xanadu By the Salt Flats," the recollection of a summer he spent when he was fifteen flipping hot dogs at Saltair, an amusement park on the shores of Great Salt Lake. Throughout the book, one is captivated by Stegner's incredible power to evoke the people and landscape and unfinished wars of the American West, a power that made him a pillar of the budding environmental movement in the 1950s and in the years up to his death in 1994. Personally, I found some of his conservation pieces in the middle of the book to be less interesting than his autobiographical sketches and fiction -- as I think anyone would -- but no Stegner anthology would be complete without them. If you've never read Stegner, I guarantee you'll love this anthology. If you have read Stegner, this is a great way to get to know some of his lesser-known short pieces. A+ and five stars.

Winner of three O. Henry Awards, the Commonwealth Gold Medal, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Kirsch Award for Lifetime Literary Achievement, and recipient of both the P.E.N. Center USA West and the California Arts Council award for his body of work, Wallace Stegner is a literary giant. In *Marking the Sparrow's Fall*, the first collection published since Wallace Stegner's death in 1993, his son Page has annotated and edited fifteen essays that have never before been published in books, a little-known novella, and Wallace Stegner's most powerful and well-known essays on the American West, which held sway in Stegner's vivid prose: It is a country to breed mystical people, egocentric people, perhaps poetic people. But not humble ones. . . . Puny you may feel there, and vulnerable, but not unnoticed. This is a land to mark the sparrow's fall. --from *Wolf Willow* Each magical piece of writing collected here reveals the stylistic grace, humorous outlook, and intellectual rigor that earned Stegner his enormous readership and fame.

.com Born on an Iowa farm in 1909, Wallace Stegner was of the last generation to see the frontier West. His father, Stegner recalled in an autobiographical essay, was a land speculator who dragged his family from one dusty Western town to another in search of easy riches, and who "died broke and friendless in a fleabag hotel, having in his lifetime done more human and environmental damage than he could have repaired in a second lifetime." It was not an auspicious beginning, but the transient youth found his home in the small libraries of towns such as Yuma, Kanab, Alamosa, Cardston, and Rock Springs. The books he read there, including John Wesley Powell's *Explorations of the Colorado River* and Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, helped him put his life into a native context; when he began to write,

first articles and then books such as *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* and *The Sound of Mountain Water*, he did so as a proud Westerner, disinclined to apologize to Eastern readers for living by choice in the Great American Outback. Stegner lived long enough to see the transformation of the American West from a vast land punctuated by small farming and ranching towns to a place of huge cities driven by high technology and the military-industrial complex. He began to write about this transformation early on, and especially about areas where urban civilization encroached on undeveloped lands. His essay "Wilderness Letter" of 1962 has often been cited as an organizing document of the then-forming environmental movement, widely discussed in connection with such matters as the damming of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon and in Dinosaur National Monument; in it, Stegner alludes to wilderness as "a part of the geography of hope," a phrase that has become a byword of modern environmentalism. (Edward Abbey, who studied creative writing under Stegner at Stanford University, adopted it as a personal mantra.) "Wilderness Letter" and other of Stegner's writings for magazines such as the *New Yorker* and *Holiday*, many of them previously uncollected, are reprinted in this collection, which underscores the importance of Stegner's work to the development of Western regional literature and of contemporary ecological letters alike. *Marking the Sparrow's Fall*, edited by Stegner's son Page, makes for a fine introduction to Stegner's conservation works--other anthologies will have to address his contributions as a historian (e.g., *Mormon Country*) and as a novelist (e.g., *Angle of Repose*)--and it should help bring readers to the books in which Stegner elaborated environmental themes, such as *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* and *The American West As Living Space*. --Gregory McNamee

From Publishers Weekly

Showcasing a talent often as breathtaking as the landscape that was Stegner's lifelong muse, this first posthumous essay collection by the novelist, historian and biographer who died in 1993 confirms his rank as one of the American West's preeminent literary champions. Though some of Stegner's most celebrated work is included among these 23 essays and one novella (all written between 1948 and 1992), many are little-known items culled from magazines and journals. Even in more obscure pieces, such as a travelogue describing the Great Salt Lake originally published in 1957 in *Holiday* magazine, readers will find the themes that Stegner used in his fictional efforts to save the American frontier from becoming irrevocably commodified. "Aridity" as the great cultural forge is an overarching motif here, but the writing is never dry. "Who built the West as a living-place, a frugal, hard, gloriously satisfying civilization scrabbling for its existence against the forces of weather and a land as fragile as it is demanding was not rugged individualists but cooperators, neighbors who knew how to help out in a crisis," he writes in "Land: America's History Teacher," a brilliant overview of frontier land "disposal" since the 18th century. In "At Home in the Fields of the Lord," he says of Salt Lake City, "Having blown tumble-weed fashion around the continent so that I am forced to select a hometown, I find myself selecting the City of the Saints." Stegner is himself a contemporary saint to the modern conservation movement that, without him, "would still be trying to mine quotable nuggets from Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold," according to Page Stegner, his son and editor. Agent, Don Congdon Associates.

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From Library Journal

A prolific and gifted writer, Wallace Stegner (1909-93) helped shape the literature of the American West. Here Stegner's son Page collects a series of his father's writing, including environmental essays and the "Wilderness Letter," which is often cited as one of the seminal documents of the environmental movement. The essays are grouped into three general sections--autobiographical, ecological, and academic--followed by the novella "Genesis." Though each section's preface gives publication dates where appropriate, individual essays are not dated according to when they were originally written, making it difficult to place them in historical context. All the essays are polished and intelligent compositions. Recommended for all Stegner collections as well as environmental and regional collections. ?Katherine K. Koenig, Ellis Sch., Greensburg, PA

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