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Von William Cronon

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NATURE'S METROPOLIS

CHICAGO AND THE GREAT WEST

WILLIAM CRONON

"Magnificent . . . the best work of economic and business history I've ever read."
—PAUL KRUGMAN



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Von William Cronon : Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.
Pamphlets or geography?Von Ein KundeNature's Metropolis is a book written under the spell of French poststructuralist theory--although you'd never know it if you read, as people used to say, "straight." This is easily discerned by knowledgeable people by virtue of the fact that Cronon spends so much time talking about the

importance of pamphlets and other forms of propaganda used by boosters of Chicago. In essence (sic), Cronon's argument is that pamphlets had a great deal more to do with why Chicago is what it is than the fact that it is located on a river flowing into the Great Lakes, a river that also happens to provide a portage to the Mississippi. Cronon's argument is the standard humanities argument these days--theories lie behind everything, "It's not natural," etc.--but though the argument has the academic stamp of approval (and Cronon is now the Jackson professor of history at the University of Wisconsin) it still sounds a bit much, to say the least, to say that real estate agents are much more important than the actual real estate in land deals. On the other hand, of course, the old story IS a bit fishy, if one listens to Cronon's tale, since the Chicago River really isn't much of a river, nor is the portage to the Miss. River all that convenient. Still, whatever one thinks about the founding of Chicago or other cities, what's important about this book is that it shows how French theories are becoming part of the very fabric of the American academy, so that the sort of book in which one used to expect to find dry and sober economic analysis (which one will also find here) now has the hint of Parisian perfume. This is, make no mistake, an important development--a joke that is even funnier if one considers the subject of the book: Chicago, perhaps the very citadel of capitalism. After all, it seems to be no accident that not only does the University of Chicago have a lock on Nobels in economics, but also that it is the lair of that Dark Lord of Law and Economics--Judge (Darth) Richard Posner. In that sense, then, maybe Cronon's book isn't so silly after all.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. "First Nature" and "Second Nature" Von Gutter-ball "Nature's Metropolis" is first, and foremost a narrative about the rise of Chicago in the 19th century. Being very similar in tone to the author's first book "Changes in the Land" (1983). Cronon seeks to establish in "Nature's Metropolis" that any understanding of the American west can not truly be comprehended unless one looks at the dominant role that Chicago played in ordering the landscape between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. By arguing that the two (city and countryside) are linked, Cronon is directly refuting the Frontier Thesis of Fredrick Jackson Turner - which held that the frontier (countryside) existed in isolation of the city. This is then the major premise of the book; that human actions are very much determined by the landscape. In building his case Cronon presents some excellent case studies of the Rail+Canal, wheat, forestry and meat packing industries in Chicago, and how they helped to turn the city into a first-rank metropolitan centre. Chapter #3 on wheat is especially interesting as Cronon describes how the Board of Trade revolutionized the exchange of grain by turning the physical crop into an abstract commodity that could be easily traded amongst merchants, traders and farmers. Central to this was of course the implementation of a standardized grading system. A final note, one of the more intriguing aspects of the book was Cronon's use of the terms "first" and "second nature". These are two concepts which he explains in the preface are derived from Hegelian and Marxist interpretations of nature - yet he does not give the reader too much more of an insight. Essentially, "first nature" is a realm where species (be they plant, animal, human) succeeded and failed mainly because of circumstances encountered within their immediate habitats. "Second nature" (such as a city like Chicago and all of its built-up environs) would put economic pressures on species hundreds of miles away - effectively altering the landscapes of these places. Unfortunately, in discussions about Cronon's book these two concepts do not really generate much debate. I find them to be very fascinating and wish they had been better explained in the book. If you too are interested in these concepts of "first" and "second nature" I think the recent book by Steven Stoll "The Fruits of Natural Advantage" (1998) would be a good place to start - it is next up on my reading list!

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. a blend of geographic, business and urban history Von Ein Kunde I bought this book during a business trip to Chicago. Late on a clear summers day I started reading as we flew west high above Cronon's America. I was still reading at L.A. and I finished it somewhere over the South Pacific as we were close to home. Its really economic geography/history with maps. Some of the analysis is dated and suggests an historian playing in an unfamiliar field e.g. Cronon spends some time developing the von Thunen rings theory of urban growth. This was considered to be a deterministic and flawed theory by my grad. geography teachers 20yrs ago . But, a book I enjoyed and reopened for me an interest in landscape transformation and urban history. You should also try Fernand Braudel's books the "commerce and civilisation" series of 3 - wonderful readable stuff on a bigger geographic scale but in a similar vein.

Kurzbeschreibung A Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and Winner of the Bancroft Prize. "No one has written a better book about a city Nature's Metropolis is elegant testimony to the proposition that economic, urban, environmental, and business history can be as graceful, powerful, and fascinating as a novel." Kenneth T. Jackson, Boston Globe In this groundbreaking work, William Cronon gives us an environmental perspective on the history of nineteenth-century America. By exploring the ecological and economic changes that made Chicago America's most dynamic city and the Great West its hinterland, Mr. Cronon opens a new window onto our national past. This is the story of city and country becoming ever more tightly bound in a system so powerful that it reshaped the American landscape and transformed American culture. The world that emerged is our own. Winner of the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize. de Cronon's history of 19th-century Chicago is in fact the history of the widespread effects of a single city on millions of square

miles of ecological, cultural, and economic frontier. Cronon combines archival accuracy, ecological evaluation, and a sweeping understanding of the impact of railroads, stockyards, catalog companies, and patterns of property on the design of development of the entire inland United States to this date. Although focused on Chicago and the U.S., the general lessons it teaches are of global significance, and a rich source of metaphors for the ways in which colonization of physical space operates differently from, and similarly to, colonization of cyberspace. This is a compelling, wise, thorough--and thoroughly accessible--masterpiece of history writ large. Very Highest Recommendation..comCronon's history of 19th-century Chicago is in fact the history of the widespread effects of a single city on millions of square miles of ecological, cultural, and economic frontier. Cronon combines archival accuracy, ecological evaluation, and a sweeping understanding of the impact of railroads, stockyards, catalog companies, and patterns of property on the design of development of the entire inland United States to this date. Although focused on Chicago and the U.S., the general lessons it teaches are of global significance, and a rich source of metaphors for the ways in which colonization of physical space operates differently from, and similarly to, colonization of cyberspace. This is a compelling, wise, thorough--and thoroughly accessible--masterpiece of history writ large. Very Highest Recommendation.