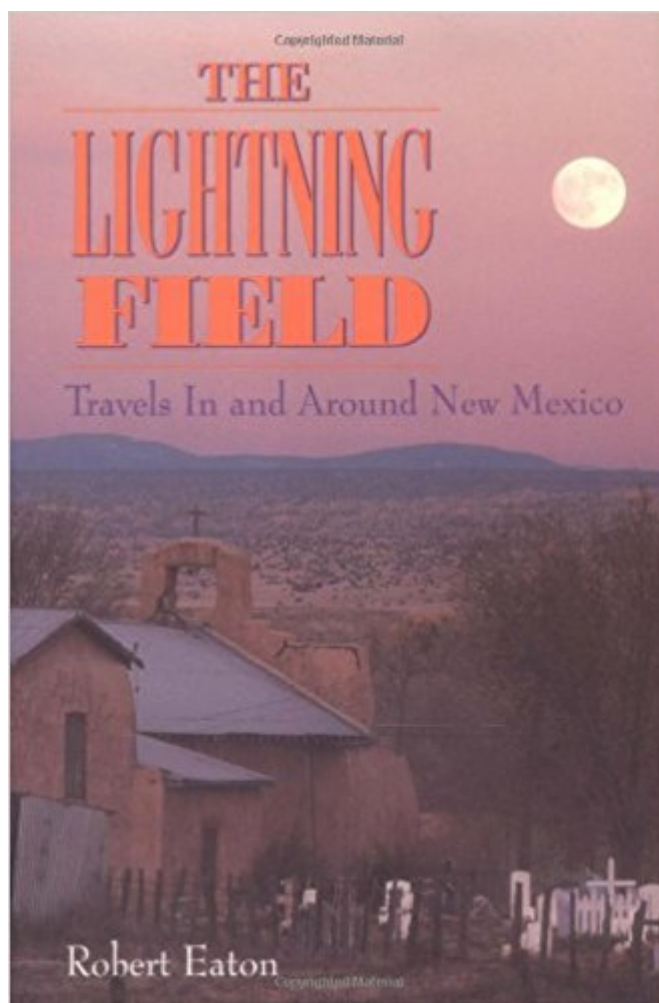


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The Lightning Field: Travels In And Around New Mexico



Synopsis

"The Lightning Field" is a series of portraits of people and out-of-the-way places in New Mexico and, occasionally, neighboring states. In the spirit of Ian Frazier's "Great Plains" and Bruce Chatwin's "In Patagonia," Robert Eaton illustrates the intimate connections between the land and the people who inhabit it. In recounting his travels, Eaton combines a fine eye for natural detail with a generous and compassionate spirit. Eaton ranges throughout the region, and few of his destinations are on the standard tourist itinerary; this is not the New Mexico of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, or Taos. We spend a day at a huge work of "minimalist land art" near Quemado, a weekend at an isolated Benedictine monastery near Abiquiu, and a winter in the haunting and disconcerting isolation of Chaco Canyon. The author skillfully weaves physical description, history, and personal anecdote, whether he is exploring the stark beauty of the high plains of northeastern New Mexico or the remote border region of the boot heel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Eaton, who works for the U.S. Department of the Interior in Santa Fe, offers ten stories written in the 1980s and 1990s about people and places in and around New Mexico. His is not the New Mexico of Santa Fe and Taos but rather the more remote state of Chaco Canyon, where he served as a ranger for five years, Quemado of the "Lightning Field" in the title, and Abiquiu, where there is a Benedictine monastery. Eaton has a good feel for the connection of the land and the people; his vignettes display his ability to blend history, physical description, and personal anecdote?e.g., his recollections of following part of the trail used by cowboys Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, or

a description of a souvenir vendor at Four Corners. His essays about experiences in Indian country are respectful, yet he does not romanticize. While this collection provides enjoyable reading, it is recommended only for the most comprehensive Southwest collections. ?Thomas K. Fry, Penrose Lib., Univ. of Denver Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

In these arresting vignettes, Eaton transverses New Mexico to plumb the depths of its magical beauty and explore the state's silent places. The radiance of Eaton's prose rests in its masterful restraint, whether he is lyrically conveying a sense of place or rendering respectful portraits of the individuals he meets. Delving into the history of indigenous peoples, Eaton writes expressively of living and working in the isolated Chaco Canyon, once inhabited by the Anasazi. Eaton also spends a day and night in Quemado, communing with artist Walter de Maria's Lightning Field, the earth sculpture that lends its name to these collected reveries. Every adventure is an enthralling gift to readers, a rich harvest that will stir the desire to experience New Mexico in anyone who has yet to venture there, and most certainly light a fire under those souls who have not recently gone back. With much to be learned from Eaton's unique sojourns, this book is an indispensable addition to travel collections. Alice Joyce --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've read several "travelogues" and such over the years about New Mexico, but no one has ever captured the reality of the place like Robert Eaton. Too often, writers focus on sensational features, or they're trying to 'sell' something. Eaton's stories are very different--they came about because of his own "deep immersion" experiences, rather than as someone just passing through. These pieces would be considered autobiographical except that he's not focused on himself--he's focused on what he's observing in others. He has an excellent eye and he's a brave, courageous reporter. The stories range from a trip to De Maria's "Lightning Field" to the Christ in the Desert Monastery to his experiences working at Chaco Canyon. All of the stories are very compelling. He's a very fine writer, and I hope that maybe one day he'll write another book.

The true excitement of New Mexico is not the cities and hotels, which can be found elsewhere, but the unique way in which humanity, now and throughout a colorful history, has lived in and died in and related to the strikingly beautiful geography of New Mexico. Drive past the new suburbs of Albuquerque and you are suddenly confronted by the overwhelming presence of nature. This is both wonderful and scary (to a city slicker). If God were anywhere, he'd be here, and you'd probably feel like striking up a conversation. Robert Eaton has lived in the Southwest for many years, and has

worked in such strikingly amazing places as Chaco Canyon. His book is an entertaining series of his personal experiences, each in a unique setting in the far reaches of New Mexico. Each experience is also an encounter with one or more colorful characters, including many native Americans, religious seekers, and loner forest rangers, not to mention rattlers, coyotes, and eagles. But place never leaves center stage for long. In fact, it is the interaction of people and place that Mr. Eaton captures with great precision and poetry. This book does not recommend hotels, restaurants, or other trappings of the comfortable life. Other books can do that. Instead, Robert Eaton shares his discoveries, collected over many years, so that we may gain a better sense of what makes New Mexico truly unique, not what makes it more of the same. If you have been to the places Eaton characterizes, as I have to some, you get to experience them again in a well-written account, even with a new richness. The adventurers among you will feel the rising urge to go and see these places first hand. (That is certainly the effect Mr. Eaton's book has had on me.) Those who prefer to experience these places in your mind's eye from the comfort and security of your plush reading chair will find that this book goes well with a glowing fire, warm dog, and perhaps a glass of Merlot.

i had to read this book for school... it was horrible. I dont think ive ever been so bored in my life. Who cares about lightening rods sticking out of the ground in new mexico? I dont... save yourself the time, money, and boredom... read something else!

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