



and the constraints of the physical environment to the history of the American West, Dant approaches her subject as a single, unified topic.

Although intended as a college text, *Losing Eden* has a narrative style and a wide-ranging scope that make it accessible to the general reader. Weighing in at just over 200 pages, it offers the most concise and straightforward overview of western environmental history available, standing in stark contrast to Richard White's comprehensive 630-page tome "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own.*"

Throughout the book, Dant develops three themes essential to understanding the environmental history of the West. Foremost is the development and effect of market capitalism in the region and the subsequent plunder of its timber, water, minerals, wildlife, and soil. Similarly, the "tragedy of the commons" theme accurately describes how the availability of open-access resources, rendered accessible by government policies, led not only to environmental degradation but also to the creation of national parks and forests as a response. Finally, but receiving less attention in the book, Dant addresses the theme of achieving sustainability.

*Losing Eden* takes a "deep history" approach, beginning with the environmental constraints faced by the first Americans during the Pleistocene Era. This theme continues with a discussion of the Columbian Exchange, which introduced to the inhabitants of the New World unfamiliar lifeforms, both beneficial (domesticated animals such as horses and chickens) and destructive (diseases and feral pigs). Likewise, the expansion of commercial enterprises such as the fur trade resulted in both positive and negative impacts to Native Americans. Nor were white settlers immune to environmental conditions; as Dant points out, "the realities of place dictated the course of westward migration for Euromericans" (p. 45).

Dant takes great care not to treat the West as an isolated entity but rather continually details the ways in which national policies and broader events impacted the western environment. For example, she points out how the Civil War "created heavier demands for natural resources" in the region (p. 66).

COWBOY AND RODEO ART J.K. Dooley Studio, Hill City, SD, (602) 549-7643. [www.jkdooleyart.com](http://www.jkdooleyart.com).

# BIG SKY JOURNAL

CATCHES THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST  
BY FOCUSING ON RANCHING, RODEO,  
BACKCOUNTRY EXPLORATION,  
FLY-FISHING, ART, ARCHITECTURE,  
WILDLIFE AND HUNTING.



PRESENTED IN LUXURIOUS  
COFFEE-TABLE FORMAT, EACH ISSUE  
OF BIG SKY JOURNAL DELIVERS THE RICH  
HERITAGE OF A UNIQUE CULTURE IN  
POSSESSION OF AN INDELIBLE SENSE OF PLACE  
— ITS PEOPLE AND HISTORY,  
ITS LANDSCAPES AND LIGHT,  
ITS RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS.

To experience the region's best writers,  
photographers and artists, please call

800-417-3314  
[www.bigskyjournal.com](http://www.bigskyjournal.com)

## Share the view from MontanaPBS.



Making a planned gift to MontanaPBS supports our legacy of remarkable programming for the future.



Crystal Beatty, Senior Director of Development

Call **406-994-6221**

[www.MontanaPBS.org/Support](http://www.MontanaPBS.org/Support)

YOU SAW THIS? Our other readers will too! Place your ad in the hands of potential customers all over the world. Classifieds are \$1.50 per word. Display advertising is priced according to size. Ask about frequency discounts. Call (406) 444-4708 or email [tryan@mt.gov](mailto:tryan@mt.gov) for more information.

Following a consideration of the ecological destruction of the nineteenth century's "Great Barbeque," Dant examines the competing impulses of conservation in the Progressive and New Deal Eras, during which the federal government sought to assert control over the commons both through preservation and development, which occurred primarily in the form of irrigation and hydroelectric projects.

Dant concisely recounts the familiar trajectory of western history, augmenting the standard narrative with recent research and new additions. For example, she highlights both the landmark Echo Park dam controversy of the 1950s and also the much lesser-known 1958 "Oxbow Incident" that underscored the environmental costs of dam building on western rivers. Dant also contributes some of her original scholarship on Frank Church, the former

Idaho senator who shepherded the passage of the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The discussion of the influence of western politicians on national environmental policy is an important contribution, and hopefully the emphasis on Church will stimulate interest in other western congressional leaders, such as Lee Metcalf, Mike Mansfield, Henry Jackson, Mo Udall, and Wayne Aspinall.

Frank Church's electoral defeat in 1980 coincides with the "Environmental Backlash and the New West," *Losing Eden's* penultimate chapter. Dant concludes with a discussion of climate change's impact on the West, an already arid environment in which drought and climate have played a significant role in constraining human activity for more than ten thousand years. Although the book's title poignantly reflects the history of environmental exploitation in the West, it also, as Dant notes, suggests that we must abandon any remaining illusions about the region's ecological order and our place within it in order to adopt a culture of sustainability.

Greg Gordon

Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington

## New Deal Cowboy

GENE AUTRY AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Michael Duchemin

University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2016. \$34.95 cloth.

In *New Deal Cowboy: Gene Autry and Public Diplomacy*, Michael Duchemin, former historian and curator at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles, examines the singing cowboy's support of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Good Neighbor policies from 1932 to 1942. By studying Autry's audio recordings, motion pictures, and radio broadcasts, Duchemin argues that Autry's support of the Roosevelt administration emerged as an intentional form of "soft-power public diplomacy." This book is an extension of Duchemin's museum exhibition *Gene Autry and the Twentieth Century West: The Centennial Exhibition, 1907-2007* and offers a compelling analysis of both the entertainer's public persona as America's singing cowboy and the ways in which the federal government used his talent to support President Roosevelt's policies at home and abroad.