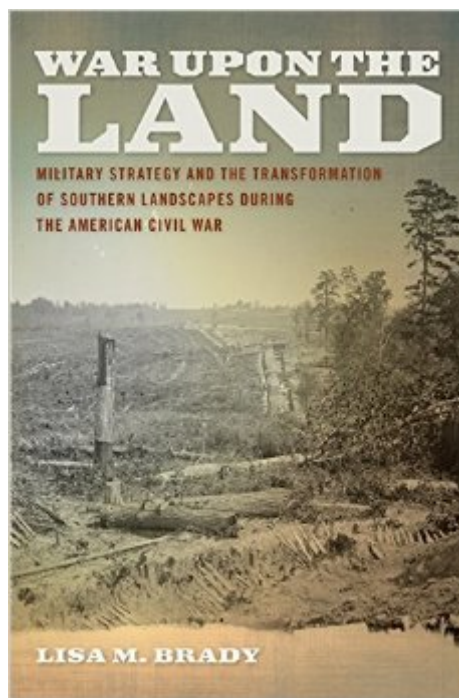


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War Upon The Land: Military Strategy And The Transformation Of Southern Landscapes During The American Civil War (Environmental History And The American South Ser.)



Synopsis

In this first book-length environmental history of the American Civil War, Lisa M. Brady argues that ideas about nature and the environment were central to the development and success of Union military strategy. From the start of the war, both sides had to contend with forces of nature, even as they battled one another. Northern soldiers encountered unfamiliar landscapes in the South that suggested, to them, an uncivilized society's failure to control nature. Under the leadership of Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and Philip Sheridan, the Union army increasingly targeted southern environments as the war dragged on. Whether digging canals, shooting livestock, or dramatically attempting to divert the Mississippi River, the Union aimed to assert mastery over nature by attacking the most potent aspect of southern identity and power—agriculture. Brady focuses on the siege of Vicksburg, the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign, marches through Georgia and the Carolinas, and events along the Mississippi River to examine this strategy and its devastating physical and psychological impact. Before the war, many Americans believed in the idea that nature must be conquered and subdued. Brady shows how this perception changed during the war, leading to a wider acceptance of wilderness. Connecting environmental trauma with the onset of American preservation, Brady pays particular attention to how these new ideas of wilderness can be seen in the creation of national battlefield memorial parks as unaltered spaces. Deftly combining environmental and military history with cultural studies, *War upon the Land* elucidates an intriguing, largely unexplored side of the nation's greatest conflict.

Book Information

Series: Environmental History and the American South Ser.

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: University of Georgia Press (April 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0820342491

ISBN-13: 978-0820342498

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #286,622 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #117 in [Books > History >](#)

[Americas > United States > Civil War > Confederacy](#) #137 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historical Geography](#) #294 in [Books > History > Americas > United](#)

Customer Reviews

War Upon the Land is a unique and highly engaging examination of the American Civil War through the lens of environmental history. Brady is able to clearly demonstrate a very fascinating aspect of this conflict, and the societies the fought it, by exploring how each side viewed their natural surroundings. By using a wide range of sources Brady artfully engages the reader to take into account the physical environment in which the war was fought in a manner that is both clear and powerful. I would highly suggest War Upon the Land to anyone interested in military, or environmental history.

I just reread this book after reading it several years ago. Environmental history is a major interest of mine, and looking at the Civil War through an environmental lens, as Brady puts it, is interesting. War and the environment is an emerging subfield. I think I better understand her point after the reread. Brady sees nature as an important historical agent, an agent without intent or consciousness but still an agent. This is an arguable point. Having "agency" usually means both intent and conscious use of whatever power the agent has to affect something. Brady makes a case for it, not entirely convincing, but interesting. Nature is not static, and this may affect military operations. This would mean rising and falling waters, weather, temperatures, mud, and such, things that change. Brady also posits the landscape is a mix of nature and human activity. It seems to be this rather than nature as a whole that she's looking at. She uses the term "agroecosystem" and certainly the North made war on the Southern landscape, notably in Sherman's marches through Georgia and the Carolinas. Structures were burned, crops destroyed, domestic animals killed or carried off, the infrastructure damaged as much as possible. Brady looks at Grant's Vicksburg campaign, in two chapters, Sherman's march, and then Sheridan's campaign in the Shenandoah as case studies.

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