



The View From Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape

Blake Harrison

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With its small native population, proximity to major metropolitan areas, and bucolic rural beauty, Vermont was fated to be a tourist mecca, forever associated in the popular imagination with maple syrup, fall colors, and ski bunnies. Tourism, for good and ill, has always been the decisive factor in the conception of rural Vermont. What is surprising, however, is the degree to which we have accepted this notion of rural Vermont as a somehow timeless entity. Blake Harrison's rich and rewarding study instead presents the construction of Vermont's landscape as a complex and ever-changing dynamic informed by progressive, modernist, and reformist thought, competing views of economic expansion, rural and urban prejudice and social exclusion, and (more recently) by land use planning and environmentalism. This broad-based study includes the early history of Vermont tourism, the concomitant abandonment of farms with the rise of the summer home, the creation of an "unspoiled" Vermont (from billboards, at least), the impact of Vermont's ski industry on tradition-bound tourism, and later efforts to legislate growth and protect an increasingly static ideal of a rural Vermont. While grounded within a specific Vermont view, Harrison has much to contribute to broader studies of rural places, tourism, and landscapes in American culture. His analysis of how physical landscapes affect and are affected by our imagined landscape, and the insight afforded by his juxtaposition of leisure and labor, will deeply inform our understanding of rural tourist landscapes for years to come. This is a truly interdisciplinary work that will satisfy and challenge historians and geographers alike.

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