

Stepping Westward: The Long Search for Home in the Pacific Northwest

Sallie Tisdale

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*

DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#3767534 in Books 1991-09Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x 7.00 x 1.25l, #File Name: 0805013539284 pages | File size: 56.Mb

Sallie Tisdale : Stepping Westward: The Long Search for Home in the Pacific Northwest before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stepping Westward: The Long Search for Home in the Pacific Northwest:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very original and openly personal approachBy Michael C. CassadyThis road trip, journey of initiation and discovery is a Joan Didion style account. A very interesting means of objectifying subjective experience important in a networking environment prone to making us statistical.11 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Good example of "Latte History"By Northwest ReaderTisdale definitely has a way with words, and the novelist's touch, at times blinking back and forth between word choices like a caution light at a semi-busy intersection. But it's about 75% cutesy, and at about 25% truth, the latter sacrificed in shoddy or missing research for the ultimate end of lancing her fierce boil of liberal guilt. And here is where the term I'm calling "latte history" comes in: applying to those writers whose familiarity with their subject is mostly found in their having read a book or two, doubtlessly while sipping some chai or coffee drink, far from the mess and blood and ambiguity of real history. A couple of examples.Some of her ignorance is mostly silly and, I suppose, trivial. She tries to create a joke about the (apparently) dreary western Oregon winters by comparing them to New York weather (p. 41). Anyone who has lived in both places (as I have) would LOVE the "dreariness" of the rain and mist, at the expense of long winters that seem to go on forever. Explorers and missionaries from NY could not believe their good fortune when

they settled in the Willamette Valley, thinking the weather of their new home salubrious in the extreme! Their diaries and letters are full of their hearty praises for the climate of their new home. This continues today, of course, with vast numbers of people apparently having little trouble adjusting to the western Oregon (and Washington) winters, and leaving the humid and frigid rust belt in droves. She also apparently is ignorant of the most basic heights of mountains, "being tempted" (she says on p. 68) to remind her readers that "Mt. Shasta (14,000+ feet) is four times higher than the highest point in New York (Mt Marcy at 5300+ feet)." She also quotes the major eruption of Mt. St. Helens as occurring in 1989 instead of when it actually occurred, 1980 (p. 172). Hmmm. Did ANYONE edit this book? But her playing fast and loose with the facts extends beyond the trivial to more serious errors, ones motivated by her desire to castigate pioneers and glorify native peoples. In her discussion of the Rogue Indian War (ca. 1855) in which tragedies and depredations occurred on both sides, she has the captive Rogues walking "hundreds of miles" to the "Grande Ronde Indian Reservation in eastern Oregon" (p. 94). The problem is that that reservation was/is in WESTERN Oregon, an error motivated by internal philosophy, and apparently by the wish to create her own "Trail of Tears." She also accepts at face value whatever the Oregon poet Joaquin Miller says, despite acknowledging that he was "master of the half-truth" (p. 93). And, if depending on poor sources is apparently OK when it supports your cause, quoting none at all is not much of a stretch either! On page 91, Tisdale states a claim that is certainly unusual enough to need some source of documentation: "Merry miners are said to have set (mountain) slopes ablaze for recreation." But there is no source cited at all for this quote. If her point was only that drunks do stupid and outlandish things, such hardly is noteworthy, living as we are in an era in which booze is the tragic fuel for murders, rapes, robbery, and mayhem. But her quote is smack in the middle of a long section whose goal is to portray miners as horrific, evil men, exemplars of greed. As such, then, she needs to quote some source. Finally--but sadly not surprisingly--she completely swallows the long-discredited notion that Chief Sealth made the speech accredited to him (p. 130), the one in which Natives will "haunt" the whites for their destruction of the land, and the one that reads more like an environmental activist speech from the 70s (for that it is what it was). She does this despite the fact that Sealth's speech mentions the destruction of the buffalo (despite the fact that that tragedy had not taken place yet, and would likely not be on the radar screen for a Native from Puget Sound!). Furtwangler's "Answering Chief Seattle" completely demolishes the idea that Sealth said anything like that, and although published after Tisdale's book by six years, he used information widely and easily available if anyone had cared to look. Tisdale apparently did not. The prototypical example of Tisdale's style, however, is how she treats the existence of the mythical creature "sasquatch" (pp. 175ff). She approaches it with childlike wonder, wanting the now-debunked Roger Patterson film of a purported sasquatch to be true, and using the primal innocence of the creature to paint the picture of the northwest that she imagines to be true, where miners "shoot" at the creature and one is reported sad in a clearcut (p. 178), obviously at the loss of its companions, the trees! Hers is a northwest that never existed, a fairy land where nothing is ever disturbed, no animal dies, no fern trampled. Where Gortex-clad yuppies can all join hands as they tread softly on twigs that never break. In other words, Tisdale is telling a bedtime story of a land that likely never existed and never will--it is a myth crafted of loss and hopes, but not truth. Perhaps Tisdale herself recognizes that she has little or nothing in common with these faraway people, who lived in another era and in other places. She admits that her belief that Teddy Roosevelt's holding to his dual truths of "loving the kill" and "virgin wilderness" was "incomprehensible" to her. And so it is. And maybe that is the core problem: Tisdale's account lacks a basic understanding of her topic, being satisfied all too often with trivial stereotypes crafted from afar. Tisdale, like other urbanites living in the liberal cities of the western Pacific Northwest, wastes little time in castigating pioneers who worried more about survival than drafting environmental impact statements; smallpox more than insisting on soy instead of milk in their lattes. These moderns would like to travel safely back to 1491, but of course with all the conveniences that the urban destruction of the environment has provided. This book is less about the PNW of the 19th-century than it is about the cultural divide that separates the modern, urban sophisticate from her or his visits to the mythical zoos of the past, zoos of their own creation. The historic Pacific Northwest of this book is a myth, a created straw man of convenience, whimsy, and childish hopes. For as many of the postmodern "historians" keep demonstrating, there is no easier target than a dead man.

Intertwining history, personal memoir, and vigilant observations about today's Pacific Northwest, *Stepping Westward* is a serendipitous journey, quirky, personal, and impassioned.

From Publishers Weekly Tisdale (*Sorcerer's Apprentice*) here conducts a familiar survey of human interference in paradise. The object of her critique is her beloved Pacific Northwest, a region encompassing Oregon, Washington, Idaho and part of Northern California. Tisdale honors what was and rails at what is. Pitted as foes are nature--giant Douglas firs, sea otters, beavers, octopus and salmon, volcanic peaks and desert coulees--and humans--whose abuses include logging and deforestation, diminishment of wildlife, and efforts to dam up streams. Tisdale is best in short bursts, as when she sizes up an Idaho potato magnate or takes a trip to the timber town of Forks, Wash. Though vividly written, the book is impressionistic in design, which can dilute an otherwise strong message. First serial to the *New Yorker*. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* The verdant landscape of the

Pacific Northwest often provokes an equally exuberant prose style from writers who live and work there. Oregon author Tisdale is no exception. With a rambling, sometimes chaotic lushness, she combines natural and social history with her own personal narrative to present an intimate yet informative regional biography of the Northwest. Tisdale recounts the almost overwhelming fecundity of plant and animal life, the devastating effects of clear-cut logging operations, and the lethal zeal of 19th-century Anglo missionaries trying to convert an unwilling indigenous population. Whether traveling through ancient forests where the trees are "indecently large" or to a lake so beautiful it should be renamed "Lake Implausible," she maintains an infectious and never-ending sense of wonder. Although her connections between the personal and the cosmic are sometimes tenuous, Tisdale has produced a loving, literate work that Northwest libraries will certainly want to add to their collections. Other, larger libraries may find this a helpful introduction to the area as well.- Jeffrey Ingram, Newport P.L., Ore. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sThe Pacific Northwest, as concept and reality, is the focus of this impressionistic, strangely seductive pastiche from lifelong area-resident Tisdale (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, 1986; *Harvest Moon*, 1987; *Lot's Wife*, 1988). The densely worded, unstructured narrative paints an ecological and spiritual portrait of a land often threatened by its most ardent admirers. Interwoven with historical records--including the testimony of explorers, pioneers, and the author herself--are accounts of the ways "we destroy the land in order to inhabit it": deforestation from logging; fishing and hunting to extinction; dams eradicating unique terrain and wildlife; the near-genocide of native tribes. But, "seduced by this land," Tisdale is at her most impassioned in depicting forests, mountains, and waterways--which seem more alive here than the people who traverse them. They are seen as epic, not only in size (Douglas firs with "more needles than this country has people," mountains equal in volume to one-trillion six-foot men), but also in the rhythms of existence, such as the "climax forest," which, "left alone...will pulse its own slow pulse, exhale its own slow breath, forever." At times, the lush, overheated prose makes for difficult reading, yet it works admirably in reflecting the bounty of the area. And, refreshingly, Tisdale, an admitted "tree hugger," does little ecological lecturing, preferring to let her tale of nature caught in a fragile balance with civilization convey its own message. An odd and lovely work for partisans of the region and nature-lovers in general. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.