

Review: *Place on the Glacial Till: time, land, and nature within an American town.*

By Thomas Fairchild Sherman

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Sherman, Thomas Fairchild. *A Place on the Glacial Till: time, land, and nature within an American town.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997. Drawings by Byron Fouts. 213 pp. US \$ 22.00 cloth ISBN: 0-19-510442-0. Acid-free paper.

Have you ever visited your favorite landscape and wondered what physical processes created it and what flora and species have occupied it? Thomas Fairchild Sherman weaves a narrative connecting the geology, flora, fauna and human settlers of his long time home, Oberlin, Ohio.

A Place on the Glacial Till romps through history, geological as well as human. The first chapters tie together the geology of north central Ohio with the eras and periods that make-up the Geologic Time Scale. In addition, Sherman presents an historical background of the geologists who developed these time periods. He continues on to discuss the effects of glaciers and the formation of the present day Chance Creek, Vermilion and Black rivers.

Two chapters are devoted to the people of the Oberlin area, both indigenous and European. Sherman describes, in detail, the daily life of the indigenous peoples and European settlers, including what they ate and how they planted their crops. His information on the Paleo-Americans comes from archeological studies of burial sites. When discussing the early European settlers, he includes personal dialogs from letters and historical papers.

The last two chapters describe the flora and fauna, past and present, and the scientists who study it. Sherman brings ecological issues into discussion with examination of the effects of humans on the planet and vice versa. He offers no solutions, nor does he preach. He attempts to make the reader understand the processes of the earth and its inhabitants and how it all ties together. In conclusion he notes that if we can understand the continuum then we can appreciate the earth and

cherish the human experience.

A Place on the Glacial Till also contains a list of the common and scientific names of the flora and fauna mentioned in the preceding chapters, as well as an annotated bibliography. In addition, there are several whimsical pencil sketches and crude, hand drawn maps.

This book is written in an easy to understand narrative providing much information without becoming bogged down in details or scientific jargon. Sherman successfully ties together the physical processes with the human history of the area. The annotated bibliography is a useful addition. I would recommend this book to someone who wants an enjoyable account of the physical as well as life processes that make up Oberlin, Ohio. Although Sherman includes background information about scientific research in the area, I would not recommend it for researchers in either the geological or environmental fields.

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