

Electronic Green Journal

Review: River of Memory: The Everlasting Columbia

By William D. Layman

Reviewed by Robert D. Hook

Moscow, Idaho, USA

Layman, William D., *River of Memory: The Everlasting Columbia*. Wenatchee, WA: Wenatchee Valley Museum in association with the University of Washington, Seattle, and the British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 2006. 165pp. ISBN 0-295-98592-5 (Pbk: paper) US \$24.95.

Ever wonder what the Columbia River was like before all the dams were built? William D. Layman has created an exhibit that explores the Columbia from its mouth, where it pours into the Pacific Ocean near Astoria, Oregon, upstream to its source in Columbia Lake, British Columbia. He presents the Columbia as it existed during the century from 1860 to 1960. This exhibit will travel to six museums in the Northwest until September 2008. (The dates at each location are included on the page following the title page.)

Layman's book, based on the exhibit, is composed for the most part of photographs, including some taken by such noted photographers as Carleton Watkins and Asahel Curtis. It is divided into segments, each following a section of the river and each with its own historic map and pictures of the native fish species which inhabit (or inhabited) that section of the river. The cartography includes a variety of styles.

River of Memory valuable for the photographs alone, but it is enriched by narratives and poetry. Sources range from diaries of early explorers through modern-day writers. It is an interesting book from beginning to end or end to beginning, depending on whether one wishes to travel the river upstream or down. It is possible to jump in anywhere as each segment can be explored independently. An interesting feature is that each photo is marked by a "milepost" indicating how far it is to the mouth or to the source.

The book will be an important purchase for libraries interested in developing their Pacific Northwest collections and for anyone interested in rivers and humans and how they influence each other. Aside from its historical value, this book can be appreciated for the photographs, the poetry, and the accounts of the personal impact of this powerful natural resource. If the book is any indication, the exhibit will be an enjoyable experience.

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