



Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West

Virginia Scharff

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From Sacagawea's travels with Lewis and Clark to rock groupie Pamela Des Barres's California trips, women have moved across the American West with profound consequences for the people and places they encounter. Virginia Scharff revisits a grand theme of United States history—our restless, relentless westward movement—but sets out in new directions, following women's trails from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. In colorful, spirited stories, she weaves a lyrical reconsideration of the processes that created, gave meaning to, and ultimately shattered the West.

Twenty Thousand Roads introduces a cast of women mapping the world on their own terms, often crossing political and cultural boundaries defined by male-dominated institutions and perceptions. Scharff examines the faint traces left by Sacagawea and revisits Susan Magoffin's famed honeymoon journey down the Santa Fe Trail. We also meet educated women like historian Grace Hebard and government extension agent Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, who mapped the West with different voyages and visions. Scharff introduces women whose lives gave shape to the forces of gender, race, region, and modernity; participants in exploration, war, politics, empire, and struggles for social justice; and movers and shakers of everyday family life.

This book powerfully and poetically shows us that to understand the American West, we must examine the lives of women who both built and resisted American expansion. Scharff remaps western history as she reveals how moving women have shaped our past, present, and future.

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