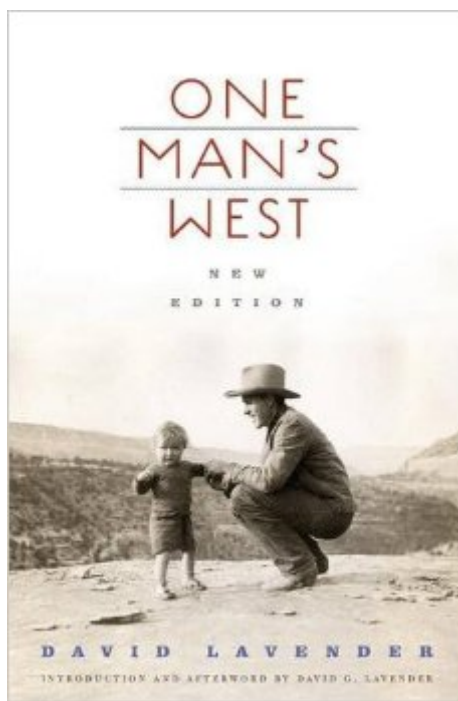


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One Man's West, New Edition



Synopsis

The American West of the 1930s and 1940s was still a place of prospectors, cowboys, ranchers, and mountaineers, one that demanded backbreaking, lonely, and dangerous work. Still, midcentury pioneers such as David Lavender remembered not the cold and the cruel fatigue, but rather the multitude of tiny things which in their sum make up the elemental poetry of rock and ice and snow. And as the nation exhausted its gold and silver veins, as law reached the boomtowns on the frontier, and as the era of the great cattle ranches and drives came to an end, Lavender felt compelled to document his experiences in rugged southwest Colorado to preserve this rapidly disappearing way of life. *One Man's West* is Lavender's ode to his days on the Continental Divide and the story of his experiences making a living in the not so wild but not yet tamed West. Like stories told around a campfire, *One Man's West* is captivating yet conversational, incredible yet realistic, and introduces some of the most charming characters in western literature. This new Bison Books edition features an introduction and afterword by the author's son that discuss other phases and facets of his father's remarkable life, as well as a tribute to the author by his grandson. It also includes nine new photographs from the Lavender family archives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's rare to find a book which is both educating and whose prose is so delectable. Upon reading it I felt I had discovered a treasure. For anyone interested in Western history, mining, or cowboying; this book is a must-read and I expect you will consider it a treasure. The characters (I could use no other word) come alive and the humor they used to transcend the toils of their difficult lives rises to

the level of their misery. And, there was a lot of misery. David Lavender was twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and the reasons for his nomination are clear - this is an excellent read. The new edition doesn't contain any additional writing by the author, but his son and grandson (both David Lavender) add some very interesting perspective along with some welcomed photographs. The book is really a series of short stories, each of which can be read in a sitting. But, I think you will find you will sneak into the next chapter.

I don't have time to give this the proper review I'd like. However, suffice it to say that this book brought the mining and ranching days in 1930's Colorado to vivid life. The writing is fabulous and doesn't lean too much toward the sentimental side. When things were hard, the author spares no words, and when things were grand, his words are sheer poetry. The author displays a clear *joie de vivre* about his early adult life out on the range and in the mines. I bought the book in Paradox valley while on a hut-to-hut mountain bike ride through the land of Lavender's youth. Reading it while memories of the landscape remained clear made the book even more of a treat. Near the end of the book there are add-ons that were tacked on after the initial publication. It's interesting to note a clear change in Lavender's tone in the latter day writing. When he doesn't like something, he spares no words and his voice is more acerbic than it ever sounded in the book's first two-thirds. Much of what he doesn't like I agree with, such as those who hunt and kill for sheer pleasure, and the immense environmental damage done to the lands by humans. It's no surprise that he became a conservationist later in life. This is one of those rare books that I didn't want to end.

The best work on the area of this grand country. *One Man's West* is an insightful book into the mountains of Colorado, and the author's experiences that made his life the miracle it became, living here.

David Lavender was a historian of the West. Simply put. But the truth is, he was a man who lived in those times we rarely hear about and that will still ring true to any traveler visiting the southwestern ranch lands and the San Juan mountains of Colorado. Normally this type of book is almost impossible to read because the writing is so poor. Not true with this book. It manages to be both elegant and perfectly down to earth at the same time. We are now on our third copy as we give them to people to read to understand and appreciate the true spirit of the West. We are happy the Lavender family added a bit of perspective and pictures to the new edition. However, David Lavender's words stand on their own and his book stands with Wallace Stegner's books for our

family and friends.

This was an enjoyable read. It will be informative to anyone interested in the end of the frontier west and its transition to more modern times. Also it is informative to anyone interested in Colorado hard rock mining and cattle ranching and the men that made their living at these difficult and dangerous trades. But, most of all, it is an enjoyable and engaging tale of one man's life, how he worked through it and of the characters he met on his life's journey. It is well written and the character portraits presented are entertaining. Good book.

Lavender spins a great yarn, and it's hard to believe he has written a novel. I feel I am right there with the author, closely sharing his experiences. His depiction of his cowboy characters and their colorful turns of phrase are dead on. Great read for those interested in the West.

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