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Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West

Virginia Scharff

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Virginia Scharff : Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great writing but a bit randomBy V. BraderThough it's not clear why these essays together make a book, each one is a well-researched piece about an interesting woman. While the author throws in a few theories that aren't particularly well researched or supported, she has a real gift for writing that makes many of the pieces a joy to read. Her essay on Grace Hebard is superb, and is probably the best short piece

written about this remarkable woman.

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--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.

From Library Journal These essays tell the stories of women who traversed the West on their own terms over two centuries and who made connections that they considered important rather than following precedents established by men. Scharff (history, Univ. of New Mexico; *Brown-Eyed Girl*) considers this independence to be an important element in the shaping of the West and the nation as a whole. To illustrate how women helped either to build or to resist westward expansion, she examines the lives of five women, from Lewis and Clark's Shoshone guide Sacajawea and Susan Magoffin, who traversed the Santa Fe Trail, all the way down to rock groupie Pamela Des Barres and her more recent arrival in California. While only specialists in women's studies and the history of the American West will fully appreciate how all these essays fit into theoretical frameworks, general readers and undergraduates will find the essays on women's suffrage in Wyoming and Grace Hebard's role there to be especially useful. For larger academic libraries. Stephen H. Peters, Northern Michigan Univ. Lib., Marquette Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Virginia Scharff's book is as exhilarating and as intellectually and emotionally expansive as our enduring dream of flight across the American land."-Elliott West, author of *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, the Rush to Colorado* "From the Inside Flap" Virginia Scharff's wonderfully readable account of women in motion complicates and enriches our understanding of the nineteenth and twentieth century West. Her gendered remapping of the regional landscape explodes traditional notions of western movement. All students of women and gender, travel and place, the West and America, would do well to read this excellent book." David M. Wrobel, author of *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* "Virginia Scharff claims for women what has long been central to the masculine mythology of the West--free movement and its many gifts, real and imagined. Her book is as exhilarating and as intellectually and emotionally expansive as our enduring dream of flight across the American land." Elliott West, author of *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, the Rush to Colorado* "Brilliant is not a word that is often a part of my critical vocabulary, but brilliantly is how *Twenty Thousand Roads* begins. When writing of Sacagawea and Susan Magoffin, Virginia Scharff shows vividly how a single life can be a source of sophisticated cultural analysis without becoming an academic artifact or an object of condescension." Richard White, author of *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West*