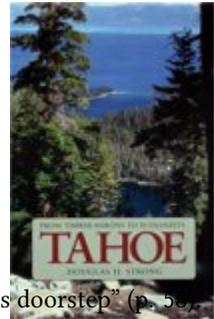


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Douglas H. Strong. *Tahoe: Timber Baron to Ecologists.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. xiii + 131 pp. \$15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8032-9258-1.

Reviewed by Cynthia H. DeChaine (Metropolitan Water District of Southern California)
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In *Tahoe: From Timber Barons to Ecologists*, Douglas Strong has succeeded in outlining the historical development of the Tahoe basin from that of a pristine wilderness to that of a small but active community. This initial historical perspective lays a basic foundation for the reader to understand the current issues of increased algal blooms in the lake due to increased sediments and nutrients, of polluted and unabated watershed runoff, and finally, of the struggle for the land to be purchased by public entities for preservation into the future. These issues have their roots in the historical development of the region.

Certainly, if one has an interest in the development, preservation, and history of the West, this book is a good primer. Tahoe's unique position along the border of two states clearly exhibits the political messiness that so often occurs in these situations, which in this case is appropriately exaggerated due to artificial boundaries like statelines. Ecosystems do not adhere to human-made boundaries. A good example of this blurring of boundaries is how what happens upstream affects those downstream. Strong notes many such examples, but one particularly clear portrayal of this occurs when he states that "A widespread American waste disposal method, dumping material into a nearby stream to be carried out of sight and out of mind, simply does not work in a basin

where the pollutants remain on one's doorstep" (p. 57).

The one major flaw of the book is its lack of clear maps. Although the book does contain a few small maps and photos, they do not carry strong visual linkages to the important issues of development versus open space and the effects of logging on Tahoe's watershed. Maps would help convey more effectively how these activities affect ecosystems like Tahoe Basin.

The author is careful not to leave the reader with a sense of hopelessness or despair, but rather provides the information necessary to increase awareness of the impacts humans have had on even the most beautiful places that remain today. It reminds us that regardless of the condition of an ecosystem currently, it is probably being impacted by human activity in one way or another. The superficial beauty may be masking the changes that we in our short lifespans do not always realize. This is an important documentation and a great way to bring these impacts to the attention of the general public.

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