

**Judith Bentley, Craig Romano.** *Hiking Washington's History*. Second Edition. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021. Illustrations, maps. 337 pp. \$19.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-295-74852-8.

**Reviewed by** Gwendolyn R. Lockman (The University of Texas at Austin)

**Published on** H-Environment (April, 2022)

**Commissioned by** Daniella McCahey (Texas Tech University)

## Reaching New Heights with the Help of History

Judy Bentley and Craig Romano's second edition of *Hiking Washington's History* challenges us to participate in historic inquiry and preservation with our feet. What reminds us of how briefly humans have walked in one another's footsteps more than a thin trail with a view of a looming mountain or a plain carved by ancient floods? What else makes us wonder about the permanence of our surroundings? Is there a chance that what we see today is what our forebearers saw two centuries or two millennia ago? The landscape of Washington State includes dramatic and diverse foregrounds for these questions. Bentley and Romano direct us to the ways we can connect to the past through present-day hiking. "We hike historic trails for resonance: for connection to the people on the land before us and to a landscape relatively constant across centuries," Bentley and Romano begin. "We also hike out of curiosity: Who went this way before? Where were they going? Who made this trail and why?" (p. 9).

As a second edition guide, *Hiking Washington's History* offers perspective on the changing nature of historical landscapes. Historic trails face contemporary obstacles to preservation in the face of overuse, irresponsible recreation, and urb-

an development. There is also the thrilling prospect of exploring trails that have been lost to us and become significant once more through preservation and conservation efforts. The second edition features forty-four hikes, including "twelve new trails, sixteen sidebars adding background information, three substantially revised hikes, descriptions of nearby hikes related to the main trails, and a timeline of trails" (p. 12). The book is organized into eight chapters, each focusing on a region of Washington and containing five to seven trails. The timeline appears after the introduction. It provides an orienting guide for the scope of history chronologically statewide, which will be helpful to readers seeking to organize themselves relative to linear time rather than regional themes.

History related to featured hikes dates to 12,000-14,000 BP (before present) and the Missoula floods, which formed the landscape of eastern Washington. For a hike that follows footsteps before memoriam, there is the Lyons Ferry and Palouse Falls hike. The timeline concludes with 2020, when the Duwamish tribe investigated the creation of a "Ridge to River Trail" in Seattle. A hike for the resulting trail through the West Duwamish Greenbelt is included in this edition.

Documentation for the history of hikes is overwhelmingly reliant on the written record of Euro-American exploration and exploitation of the West. However, Bentley and Romano include a great deal of Indigenous history and are keenly aware that these western United States we now call Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia are modern inventions, for which the land has no regard.

Each chapter includes an overview of the history of its featured region. Though the authors did not have to create a guide that might be enjoyed cover to cover, they have accomplished such a feat. By organizing the guide regionally, readers and hikers can understand the topography of Washington and the interactions between people and place over time. The authors organize the hike profiles into five parts: hook sentence to describe the hike; hiking specifics (distance, elevation gain, difficulty, resources and notes, and directions to the trail); historic overview; detailed hike description and narrative; and nearby hikes and historical sites. One of the difficulties of writing a guide such as this is deciding which history to omit: a hiking guide cannot include long investigations of its subjects. Certain hikes include “sidebars” that dive deeper into one historical aspect of the trails and sites. For example, the Yakama-Cowlitz Trail, described as a “7,000 year old trail, traveled by Native Americans to reach meadows and lakes in the Cowlitz Pass highlands,” also includes a sidebar that describes women volunteers who worked in forest fire lookouts before the establishment of the US Forest Service (p. 179). Bentley and Romano strike a balance with precision, between historical narrative and practical guide.

*Hiking Washington’s History* is an excellent resource for historically minded hikers. It is not an extensively cited, critical exposition on Washington’s hiking, political, environmental, or colonial history. The authors balance concision with breadth and challenge Eurocentric histories by emphasizing the importance of Indigenous way-

making and trails. In addition to Euro-American travel writing, the authors use diverse sources, including fiction, painting, photography, poetry, oral history, word of mouth, and federal, state, and local records.

If there is room for an additional actor or perspective that does not appear prominently in this guide, it is the nonhuman. Climate, geology, hydrology, and botany might further enrich this historical guide by connecting hikers to the changes and the constants of the nonhuman realm, which has both influenced and been influenced by human history. Each chapter introduction hints at this broader concept of the world through which we walk, to be sure, but readers might benefit from knowing more of the nonhuman company they might find on each trail.

*Hiking Washington’s History* does not include a conclusion, but it does not need one. As a well-researched guide, this book will delight historians, students, and hikers alike. It is not a traditional academic monograph. However, Bentley and Romano provide enough enticement and historical context to encourage hikers to explore Washington’s trails and be stewards of the land and its history.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at  
<https://networks.h-net.org/h-environment>

**Citation:** Gwendolyn R. Lockman. Review of Bentley, Judith; Romano, Craig, *Hiking Washington's History*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. April, 2022.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=57414>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No  
Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.