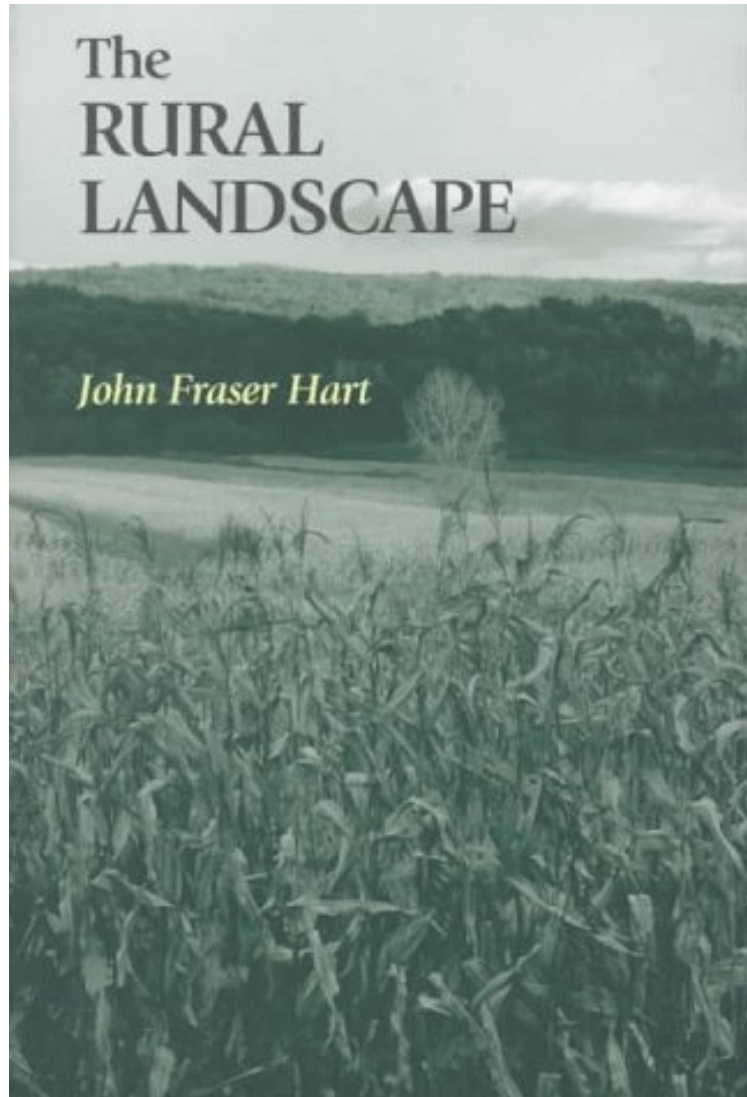


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The Rural Landscape

John Fraser Hart

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John Fraser Hart : The Rural Landscape before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rural Landscape:

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In this book, John Fraser Hart offers a comprehensive handbook to understanding the elements that make up the rural landscapethose regions that lie at or beyond the fringes of modern metropolitan life. Though the last two centuries have seen an inversion in the portion of people living on farms to those in cities, the land still beckons, whether traversed in a car or train, scanned from far above, or as the locus of our food supply or leisure. The Rural Landscape

provides a deceptively simple method for approaching the often complex and variegated shape of the land. Hart divides it into its mineral, vegetable, and animal components and shows how each are interdependent, using examples from across Europe and America. Looking at the land forms of southern England, for instance, he comments on the use of hedgerows to divide fields, the mineral or geomorphological features of the land determining where hedgerows will grow in service of the human animal's needs. Hart reveals the impact on the land of human culture and the basic imperative of making a living as well as the evolution of technical skills toward that end (as seen in the advance of barbed wire as a function of modern transportation). Hart describes with equal clarity the erosion of land to form river basins and the workings of a coal mine. He charts shifting patterns of crop rotation, from the medieval rota of food (wheat or rye), feed (barley or oats), and fallow (to restore the land) to modern two-crop cycle of corn and soybeans, made possible by fertilizers and pesticides. He comments on traditions of land division (it is almost impossible to find a straight line on a map of Europe) and inventories a variety of farm structures (from hop yards and oast houses to the use of dikes for irrigation). He identifies the relict features of the landscape from low earthen terraces once used in the southern United States to prevent erosion to old bank buildings that have become taverns and barns turned into human homes. Carrying the story of the rural landscape into our frantic era, he describes the "bow wave" where city life meets rural agriculture and plots the effect of recreation and its structures on the look of the land.

"John Fraser Hart's study of the ever-changing rural landscape is a competent and richly illustrated account of human endeavour, charting patterns of land use across time and space, from the small cross-ploughed fields of Neolithic Britain to the vast wheat-producing plains of modern-day America. It reveals how history is continuously incorporated into the landscape." (Times Literary Supplement)"Hart has a keen eye, a facile pen, and a love for conversation with people who live and work in such places. The result is an admirable and wide-ranging book." (Agricultural History)"A wonderful record to have between two covers... well produced with photographs of exceptional clarity." (The Times Higher Education Supplement)"This layperson's guide to the rural landscape, written by one of the world's foremost experts, treats the contemporary rural landscape not as an artifact of the past but rather as a continuing product of human impacts on nature. John Fraser Hart makes clear how history gets reincorporated continuously as each generation makes changes in the landscape to suit its own needs." (John C. Hudson, Northwestern University)"No one knows our rural landscapes better than John Fraser Hart and no one has written as clearly and tellingly about them. He tells us what all those visible patterns and structures really mean in terms of life and work and the larger forces that impinge upon them. This is a richly illustrated and informative work about our constantly changing countryside." (D. W. Meinig, Syracuse University)About the AuthorJohn Fraser Hart is professor of geography at the University of Minnesota. His previous books include *The South*, *The Land That Feeds Us* (recipient of the J. B. Jackson Prize from the American Association of Geographers), and, as editor, *Our Changing Cities*. *The Rural Landscape* is a thoroughly reworked successor to his earlier book, *The Look of the Land*, with only a few relict features.