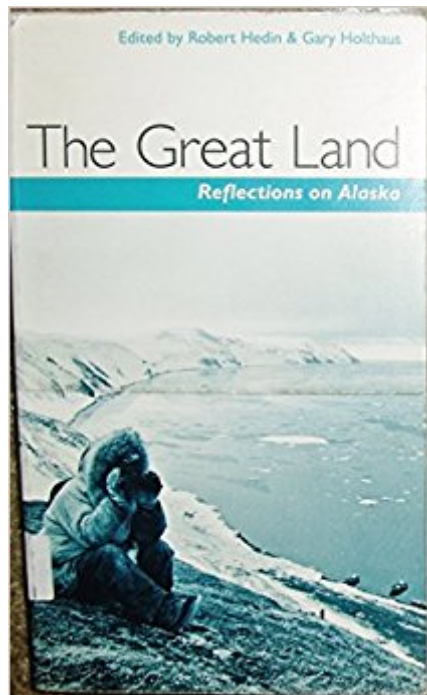




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# The Great Land: Reflections On Alaska



## Synopsis

Takes readers whale watching, glacier viewing, and visiting the town of Cordova in the wake of the great Exxon Valdez oil spill. More than a scenic tour, it offers observations of the Aleuts by a Russian Orthodox priest, remembrances of changing lifeways by a young Eskimo, and recollections of the first white explorers by a 120-year-old Athabaskan woman. It features contributions by visiting naturalists John Muir and Edward Hoagland, literary views from John Dos Passos, and contributions by native Alaskans whose names are not as well known but who know their land and their neighbors as no outsider can.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Alaska, that harsh and unforgiving land, is chronicled on a grand scale here by 20 writers from the 19th and 20th centuries, including such well-known names as John Muir, Edward Hoagland and John Dos Passos. The essays cover a diversity of topics ranging from local reaction to the Exxon Valdez disaster to a Russian missionary's fascinating 19th-century observations about the Aleut people. Many of the accounts are highly personal, such as the excerpt from Libby Beaman's diary (1879-1880). The first non-Native American woman to reside in the remote Pribilof Islands, she writes of being captivated by the islands' many seals, only to later witness a slaughter for their pelts. "Wake of the Unseen Object: Black River" by Tom Kizzia gives readers an inside look at a contemporary village where old customs are "part of a separate world lying beneath the visible surface." All of the stories touch upon the beauty of nature in some way, with rich firsthand descriptions of whales, sea otters, grizzly bears, spawning salmon and more. A worthy book for

those interested in Alaska and the rugged individuals who call it home. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This set of pieces about Alaska includes historic documents, such as the 1924 anthropological account of Aleuts by Russian Orthodox priest Ivan Veniaminov, and Washington, D.C., native Libby Beaman's nineteenth-century comments on the Pribilof Islands. It includes contributions from Native Alaskans--Peter Kalifornsky, Belle Herbert, Jennie Thulnaut--who told their stories to nonnative redactors. Still others entries are by classic nature writers like John Muir (whose contribution here is an exception from his customary misanthropy) reporting nonnative first impressions. Some are by hands far too seasoned and masterly to be called newcomers among writers on Alaska; such authors, like Richard Nelson, simply do not yet enjoy the acclaim that ordains modern masters such as the unpredictable Edward Hoagland and the sclerotic John Haines (the state's preeminent poet, who writes about his tearless departure from Alaska). And finally, some few contributors provide natural histories that may fail to interest readers enticed by the editors' introductory remarks that "all the ineffable mystery of the past, the whole of human history resides in the Southeastern clouds and mountains, and some sodden dawns in this country are like the earliest dawns in the formation of the earth." Roland Wulbert --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I had this collection of essays in college, and lost it in a divorce (lost as in misplaced, not as in she wanted it; she didn't). Essays include very early accounts of Alaskan exploration, Native Alaskan narratives (in the original language with English translations) to modern essays on the ecology and sociology of Alaska. "No Road" by John Keeble is of particular interest, as it maps out the impact of the Exxon-Valdez disaster on Cordova, a small fish and lumber village laid near to waste by the spill. If we want lessons to guide us during the British Petroleum fiasco in the Gulf of Mexico, this is the place to start. Excellent work by the editors, and fine work from the authors.

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