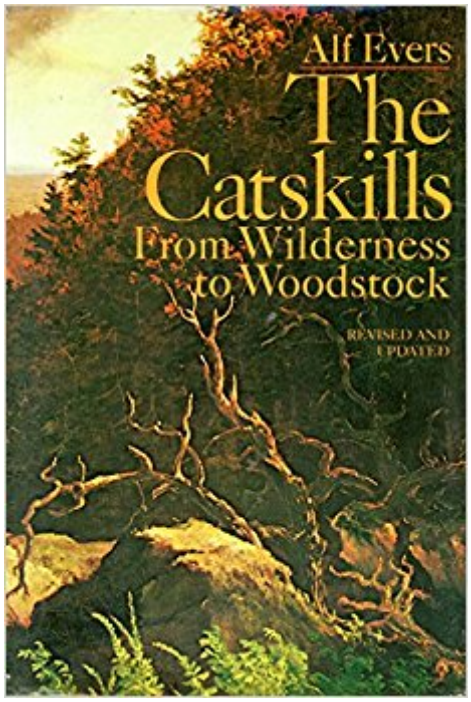
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The Catskills: From Wilderness To Woodstock



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Synopsis

"The Catskills" tells the story of one of America’s most historically rich and romantic regions. Alf Evers evokes the special charm of the Catskills region with explorations of its flora and fauna, legends, superstitions, and natural and unnatural wonders. Packed with illustrations detailing the history of the Catskills from the time of its first settling through the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the Borcht Belt years, the famed Woodstock festival, up to the present, "The Catskills" is a memorable book that does full justice to a vital vein of our American heritage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a great book to have if you’ve spent any time at all in the Catskill Mountains in NY state. The pictures alone are worth keeping the book on your coffee table.

A master historian/storyteller!

the best history of the Catskills!

In 1998 and 1999, I spent many of my free weekends in the Catskill Mountains (not too far from where I live), frantically climbing the 35 peaks required for membership in the Catskill Mountain 3500 Club.As I did, I became more and more interested in the story behind the mystical woods I had become so irrevocably attached to. I learned of this book. I could not find it, but everyone said it was the book to read, referenced in any other book about the region I could find.Finally I did (not through

, but what the hell ...).I could not put it down - what I had traipsed through came alive on the page, yet many years ago in time.But you needn’t have earned this appreciation to enjoy this book.Evers, still going strong in his late nineties as the Town of Woodstock historian (I talked to him on the phone once) draws on his extensive training in folklore to make these mountains, America’s first wilderness, come alive not just through the lives and works of its rich and powerful but most importantly in the voices of the humble people of the region - the farmers and settlers who in many cases left little to show for their efforts but their names on some feature of land somewhere.Nor is he dry ... events, whether legendary or factual, that took place centuries ago, like Peter Delabigarre’s first recorded ascent of what is now known as Kaaterskill High Peak, or the Anti-Rent War’s bloody climax, are related as freshly as if Evers were an eyewitness.His history also avoids any inadvertent tendency to center on one area and pass it off for the whole Catskill region. He tells the stories of Woodstock well but when he needs to go to Delaware or Sullivan counties, he does, without a hint of ignorance.And his love for the region ... in his words one can, if one has been there, place oneself amidst the fragrant balsam fir of a high summit, a place like a dream one can always return to no matter the weather or season; athwart a rippling tributary, its clear, trout-friendly waters headed for the taps of New York City, the water John Burroughs said you could live on for a few days. If you haven’t experienced those things, he’ll make you want to.So many of these stories - Burroughs’ trampings, the construction of Ashokan reservoir, the framing of the Hardenburgh patent, Guyot’s surveys - are alone worth the price of admission. You may know them already, but you’ll learn so much more.My only complaint would be the last chapter, an attempt to bring the story into the late 1970s with the Temporary Commission. While this is long on facts, it betrays haste in keeping the book up to date. It lacks the semi-mythical yet assured quality of the rest of the narrative.But, if your pulse quickens at the mention of placenames like Phoenicia, West Kill, Neversink or Shinhopple; if you have ever braved the spruce ramparts of Rocky Mountain or trudged through snow in waders to cast the Junction Pool’s first fly of the season, you will find your ample knowledge of the Catskills amplified a thousandfold.

I purchased this book in 1973 for my Father, who was born and raised in Kingston, New York.Evers’ book is a masterpiece-a popularized history of the Catskills, from the days of the Hardenburgh Patent(early 1700s) up to the time of Woodstock(1969 and immediately after). It is a history which presents the facts, but never loses touch with the human dimension.It is also serious enough to present the facts as hemlock trees, quarries and other resources were successively pillaged without the slightest concern for the future. This was the world of my Father’s childhood and that of my

parents, grandparents and great grandparents.It is a wonderful book and generously illustrated. It helped both my Father and I to develop a coherent picture of our family past. We were able to bridge the gaps between disconnected names, places and events.I must give this book my highest personal recommendation.

This is a tremendously well-researched, well written and compelling history of the one of the most important regions in America.The Catskill Mountains are an ecological, economic and cultural region in southeastern New York State, some four million acres in size, stretching west from the Hudson River.In his sweeping history of the region, Alf Evers, a historian and life-long native of the region, touches on every aspect of the Catskills, including its legends, lore and superstitions. This book has it all - from the Hardenbergh Patent, which continues to haunt the region to this day, to the Hudson River School of art and the Catskill Mountain House.Alf Evers "The Catskills" is a work of art and of all the many great books he has published on the region, this is his best and most important.

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