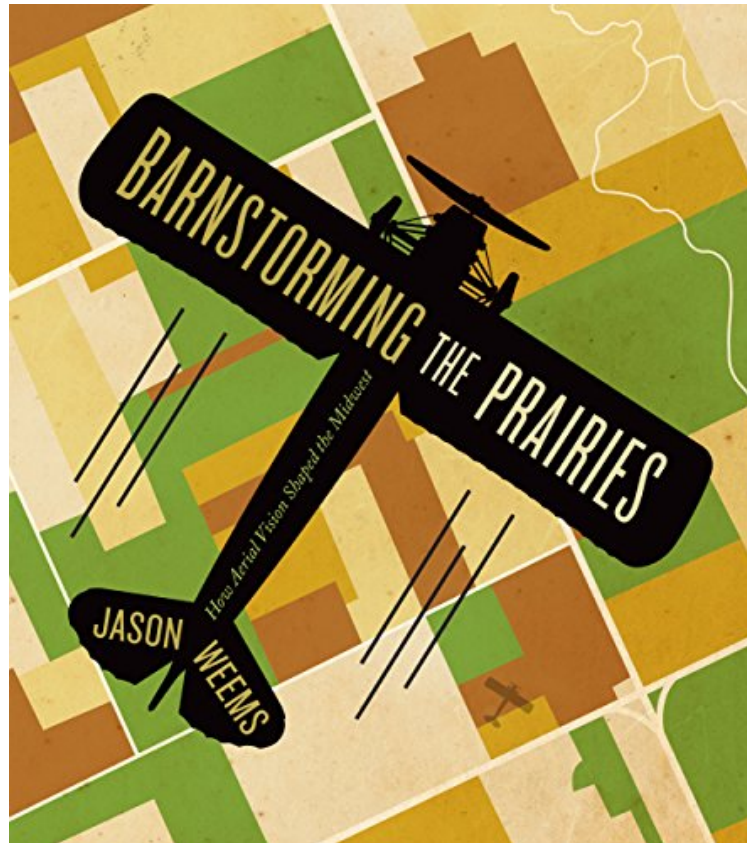


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Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest

Jason Weems

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Jason Weems : Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Individual Farmers Impacted by Views Created from Photography from Airplanes. By Elinor M This book was very enlightening to me on several levels. First, it tied together the organization for private ownership of land (read farms) from the earliest days of the Republic to the present day. (Yes, there was a Jeffersonian philosophy for creating individual farms moving east to west). It also outlined the impact of the organization of land on the farming community in Iowa and other prairie states. How then Depression Era programs moved individual, highly independent farmers to view their farms as a part of a larger whole and not in isolation. The farmers then planned the utilization of their land in a more coordinated and creative fashion. And, how this new construct came about due to overhead photography from a relatively new invention, airplanes. I enjoyed the book and my knowledge broadened. I recommend this book to anyone curious how early technology had an impact on farms in the west.

To Midwesterners tucked into small towns or farms early in the twentieth century, the landscape of the American heartland reached the horizon—;and then imagination had to provide what lay beyond. But when aviation took off

and scenes of the Midwest were no longer earthbound, the Midwestern landscape was transformed and with it, Jason Weems suggests in this book, the very idea of the Midwest itself. *Barnstorming the Prairies* offers a panoramic vista of the transformative nature and power of the aerial vision that remade the Midwest in the wake of the airplane. This new perspective from above enabled Americans to conceptualize the region as something other than isolated and unchanging, and to see it instead as a dynamic space where people worked to harmonize the core traditions of America's agrarian character with the more abstract forms of twentieth-century modernity. In the maps and aerial survey photography of the Midwest, as well as the painting, cinema, animation, and suburban landscapes that arose through flight, Weems also finds a different and provocative view of modernity in the making. In representations of the Midwest, from Grant Wood's iconic images to the Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright to the design of greenbelt suburbs, Weems reveals aerial vision's fundamental contribution to regional identity—to Midwesternness as we understand it. Reading comparatively across these images, Weems explores how the cognitive and perceptual practices of aerial vision helped to resymbolize the Midwestern landscape amid the technological change and social uncertainty of the early twentieth century.