

The Gift Of Good Land

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in Susan A. Brewer's fascinating *The Best Land* she recounts the story of the parcel of central New York land on which she grew up. Brewer and her family had worked and lived on this land for generations when the Oneida Indians claimed that it rightfully belonged to them. Why she wondered, did she not know what had happened to this place her grandfather called the best land here she tells its story tracing over the past four hundred years the two families her own European settler family and the Oneida Mohawk family of Polly Denny who called the best land home situated on the passageway to the west the ancestral land of the Oneidas was coveted by European colonizers and the founders of the Empire State. The Brewer and Denny families took part in imperial wars the American Revolution broken treaties the building of the Erie Canal native removal the rise and decline of family farms bitter land claims controversies and the revival of the Oneida Indian Nation as Brewer makes clear in *The Best Land* through centuries of violence bravery greed generosity racism and love the lives of the Brewer and Denny families were profoundly intertwined the story of this homeland she discovers unsettles the history she thought she knew with clear determination to tell history as it was without sugarcoating or ignoring the pain and suffering of both families Brewer navigates the interconnected stories with grace humility and a deep love for the land *The Best Land* is a beautiful homage to the people the place and the environment itself.

He also underscores the tragic history of the indigenous peoples of these regions and shows how they came to lose possession of their land to newly formed governments made up of Europeans with European interests at heart. Weaver shows that the enormous efforts involved in defining and registering large numbers of newly carved out parcels of property for reallocation during the Great Land Rush were instrumental in the emergence of much stronger concepts of property rights and argues that this period was marked by a complete disregard for previous notions of restraint on dreams of unlimited material possibility. Today while the traditional forms of colonization that marked the Great Land Rush are no longer practiced by the European powers and their progeny in the New World the legacy of this period can be seen in the Western powers' insatiable thirst for economic growth including newer forms of economic colonization of underdeveloped countries and a continuing evolution of the concepts of property rights including the development and increasing growth in importance of intellectual property rights.

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