In the 1970s, a small group of scholars launched the field of environmental history. These pioneers practiced a new approach to the study of history by considering humans’ relationship to their environment and the effect that humans’ interactions with their environments has had on historical developments. From its awkward beginnings to its transformation into a sophisticated academic field, environmental history has offered an important lens through which to view the past. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to the study of history, environmental historians investigate economic, political, scientific, technological, social, and cultural trends throughout history as they relate to both the natural and built environment. *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History* reflects the origins of the field, examining the role of the environment in our social institutions, political spheres, popular imagination, and daily life.

*The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History* focuses on both Canada and the United States. With one of the longest borders in the world, these two nations share a remarkable landscape—including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Great Lakes and riparian watersheds, prairies and mountain chains, marine habitats and urban space. Since the first Europeans arrived in the New World, the environments and histories of Canada and the United States have been intertwined. These interactions date back even further, of course, given the intense interactions between native peoples over a landscape unmarked by our current political boundaries.

The North American environment—and American and Canadian attitudes toward nature—have developed and shifted throughout time. The continent’s landscape has evolved continuously, from the establishment of farms in the colonial period, to the construction of rail networks across both nations in the nineteenth century, to the cleanup of toxic waste sites in the twentieth century. To best demonstrate these developments, the atlas has been arranged in seven chronological chapters, spanning the precolonial period to the present day.

Because environmental history is interdisciplinary, it often overlaps in focus with environmental science, which examines the relationship between humans and natural systems, and environmental policy, which considers legislation and current issues relating to the management of the environment. To help emphasize the recurring topics that appear in these interconnected fields, each chapter has been divided into six thematic categories: Agriculture; Wildlife and Forestry; Land Use Management; Technology, Industry, and Pollution; Human Habitats; and Ideology and Politics.

Maps, charts and tables, and photographic images illuminate many of the topics discussed in the articles. Some maps point out the specific location of geographic features, for example, mining regions, western dams, or public lands, that have been discussed in a particular article. Other maps show demographic changes, such as urbanization patterns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or shifts in agricultural trends, such as the production of corn, wheat, and cotton before and after the Civil War. Charts and tables provide statistical information, for instance, timber production or levels of smoke pollution. Photographs and illustrations accompany many of the articles; many of them document particular events, such as the first Earth Day in 1970, or offer readers a sense of a society’s attitudes toward the environment, such as the Romantic painters’ depiction of idyllic natural settings during the nineteenth century.

The atlas also features sidebars that highlight a particular subject related to the topic or, in some instances, provide excerpts of passages from books or documents. Many of the historical and environmental topics covered in the atlas recur within and across the various chapters, offering a sense of the interconnectedness of events, trends, and themes throughout U.S. and Canadian history. For this reason, the atlas includes in-text cross-references that will direct readers to pages with additional information on the topic. Each article also includes a distinct Further Reading section that directs readers to important literature, such as books or scholarly journal articles, on the subject.

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Measurements are given in English units, followed by their metric equivalents in parentheses. As the metric ton is almost equal to the English ton, we have not provided a conversion in an effort to conserve space. In statistical charts and tables, we have left the data in their original form. However, where the information in a chart or table is provided for comparative purposes, we have converted the data to equivalent units.

At the end of the book is a timeline spanning the pre-Columbian period to the present day; it highlights important events, legislation, and trends that relate to the environmental history of Canada and the United States. An extensive bibliography offers readers a list of sources that will provide further reading on various topics. To make this list accessible to users, it has been divided into the following sections: general titles, sources dealing with the United States, sources dealing with Canada, an era-by-era section that mirrors the chapter divisions of the book, and a thematic section that reflects the six major categories repeated in each chapter. A list of contributors displays the vast range of expertise that has contributed to the production of this atlas. A detailed name, place, and concept index offers users an additional means of locating topics of interest.

Preface is not final and is subject to change prior to publication.