



Title: The Collector: David Douglas and the Natural History of the Northwest

Author: Jack Nisbet

Description:

Jack Nisbet first told the story of British explorer David Thompson, who mapped the Columbia River, in his acclaimed *Sources of the River*. That book set the standard for research and narrative biography for the region. Now Nisbet turns his attention to David Douglas, the premier botanical explorer in the Pacific Northwest and other areas of western North America. Douglas' discoveries include hundreds of western plants most notably the Douglas Fir.

The Collector tracks Douglas' fascinating history, from his humble birth in Scotland in 1799 to his botanical training under the famed William Jackson Hooker to his adventures in North America discovering "exotic" new plants for the English and European market. The book takes readers along on Douglas' journeys into a literal "brave new world" of then-obscure realms from Puget Sound to the Sandwich Islands. In telling Douglas' story, Nisbet evokes a lost world of early exploration, pristine nature, ambition, and cultural and class conflict with surprisingly modern resonances.

Reviews

Booklist:

Intrepid. Indefatigable. Enthusiastic. Enduring. The adjectives used to describe pioneering botanist David Douglas are nearly as extensive as the list of plants this resourceful explorer introduced to the world. From the towering fir that bears his name to lowly alpine mosses, Douglas's extensive horticultural discoveries fueled the insatiable British and European appetite for exotic plants and secured his legacy as one of the most prolific and fearless plant-hunters of the nineteenth century. Historian and naturalist Nisbet traces the unlikely evolution of this audacious adventurer from his early days as an apprentice gardener in his native Britain to the rough-and-tumble years spent traversing the daunting terrain of the Pacific Northwest and beyond in search of new species of trees, shrubs, flowers, and herbs. The result is an exhilarating biography that provides an entertaining portrait of the unfettered determination that drove one of the giants in the field of botanical exploration and infused the young nation he viewed with a keen and zealous spirit.