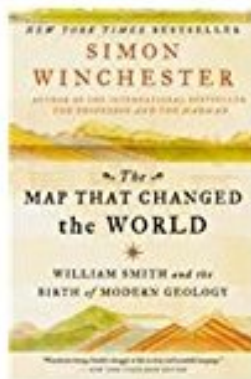


[PDF] The Map That Changed The World: William Smith And The Birth Of Modern Geology

SIMON WINCHESTER, Soun Vannithone - pdf download free book



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Description:

Once upon a time there lived a man who discovered the secrets of the earth. He traveled far and

wide, learning about the world below the surface. After years of toil, he created a great map of the underworld and expected to live happily ever after. But did he? Simon Winchester (*The Professor and the Madman*) tells the fossil-friendly fairy tale life of William Smith in *The Map That Changed the World*.

Born to humble parents, Smith was also a child of the Industrial Revolution (the year of his birth, 1769, also saw Josiah Wedgwood open his great factory, Etruria, Richard Arkwright create his first water-powered cotton-spinning frame, and James Watt receive the patent for the first condensing steam engine). While working as surveyor in a coal mine, Smith noticed the abrupt changes in the layers of rock as he was lowered into the depths. He came to understand that the different layers--in part as revealed by the fossils they contained--always appeared in the same order, no matter where they were found. He also realized that geology required a three-dimensional approach. Smith spent the next 20 some years traveling throughout Britain, observing the land, gathering data, and chattering away about his theories to those he met along the way, thus acquiring the nickname "Strata Smith." In 1815 he published his masterpiece: an 8.5- by 6-foot, hand-tinted map revealing "A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales."

Despite this triumph, Smith's road remained more rocky than smooth. Snubbed by the gentlemanly Geological Society, Smith complained that "the theory of geology is in the possession of one class of men, the practice in another." Indeed, some members of the society went further than mere ostracism--they stole Smith's work. These cartographic plagiarists produced their own map, remarkably similar to Smith's, in 1819. Meanwhile the chronically cash-strapped Smith had been forced to sell his prized fossil collection and was eventually consigned to debtor's prison.

In the end, the villains are foiled, our hero restored, and science triumphs. Winchester clearly relishes his happy ending, and his honey-tinged prose ("that most attractively lovable lusterlike Paleozoic arthropod known as the trilobite") injects a lot of life into what seems, on the surface, a rather dry tale. Like Smith, however, Winchester delves into the strata beneath the surface and reveals a remarkable world. --Sunny Delaney --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly As he did in *The Professor and the Madman*, Winchester chooses an obscure historical character who is inherently fascinating, but whose life and work have also had a strong impact on civilization. Here is William Smith, the orphan son of a village blacksmith, with lots of pluck and little luck until the end of his life when this pioneering first geological cartographer of the world beneath our feet was finally and fully recognized. Smith's life illustrates the interconnectedness of early 19th-century science, the industrial revolution, an intellectual climate that permits a look beyond religious dogma, and the class biases that endlessly impede his finances and fortunes. Published in 1815, Smith's huge and beautiful map of geological strata and the fossils imbedded in them blazed the way for Darwin and the creation-vs.-evolution debates that rage even day. Winchester is a fine stylist who also has a fine, clear reading voice. He fully engages listeners, not only with the excitement of Smith's life and work, but even with geological explications that would have been pretty dull in science class. Simultaneous release with HarperCollins hardcover (Forecasts, June 4).

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