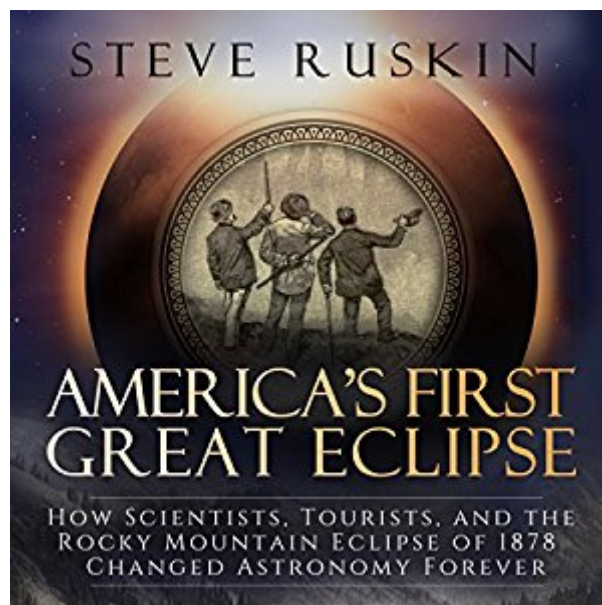




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America's First Great Eclipse: How Scientists, Tourists, And The Rocky Mountain Eclipse Of 1878 Changed Astronomy Forever



Synopsis

America's First Great Eclipse takes listeners on a thrilling historical journey, revealing that 19th-century Americans were just as excited about a total solar eclipse as we are today...and, like us, were willing to travel thousands of miles to see it. The upcoming total solar eclipse on August 21, 2017, is being called the Great American Eclipse. But it is not the first eclipse to deserve that title. In the summer of 1878, when the American West was still wild, hundreds of astronomers and thousands of tourists traveled by train to Wyoming, Colorado, and Texas to witness America's first "Great Eclipse". America's First Great Eclipse tells the story of a country, and its scientists, on the brink of a new era. Near the end of the 19th century, when the United States was barely a hundred years old, American astronomers were taking the lead in a science that Europeans had dominated for centuries. Scientists like Samuel Langley, Henry Draper, Maria Mitchell, and even the inventor Thomas Edison were putting America at the forefront of what was being called the "new astronomy". On July 29, 1878, having braved treacherous storms, debilitating altitude sickness, and the threat of Indian attacks, they joined thousands of east-coast tourists and Western pioneers as they spread out across the Great Plains and climbed to the top of 14,000-foot Pikes Peak, all to glimpse one of nature's grandest spectacles: a total solar eclipse. It was the first time in history so many astronomers observed together from higher elevations. The Rocky Mountain eclipse of 1878 was not only a turning point in American science, but it was also the beginning of high-altitude astronomy, without which our current understanding of the universe would be impossible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

America's First Great Eclipse is the perfect guide to the 1878 eclipse giving the reader a picture of the types of people who came west to Colorado and Wyoming which were located on the path which expected to see the full eclipse. The scientists and recreational viewers were also hoping the increased altitude would provide them with the ability to get better observational results. This is a great primer for more experienced eclipse viewers, but not so much science that the average reader will get discouraged. It's a great, quick read.

There are so many pop quasi-scientific tomes out there, it was refreshing to read about an amazing time in the scientific world where so many were awe struck just as some of us are now. We look on Sagan and Degraesse and Kaku as current science popularizers, not realizing how many came before and how hungry (maybe even more than we are) we have always been. We believe we are much more interested in science than our ancestors, yet, Ruskin lets us see a world with more change, advancement and color than the one we populate. It's refreshing to think we can look on a spectacle with the same wonder and appreciation they did. This book can reach beyond the current event and teach us that we are all connected in that long line of discovery, education and tale-telling and that maybe, we're not so different after all.

Full Disclosure: I am an author and I know Steve Ruskin. I purchased and read this book on my own accord. This is a great history lesson! Not only is there great stuff in here about how astronomy changed and grew with the observation of this eclipse, but there are a lot of insights into the history of the time and the American Mid-West. I highly recommend this for anyone interested in either!

Ruskin invites you into the anticipation of watching the 1878 solar eclipse over the rocky mountains, which gained the world's attention. I enjoyed being taken back to the non-social media era, (because it's so easy to "witness" something like this now) and was drawn into all that was at stake to experience something so grand. The planning, the coordination involved to document and witness such a rare sighting is all dependent on a climate that can never be controlled. An educational and interesting read.

"America's First Great Eclipse" captures the excitement of the 1878 eclipse and vividly portrays this time in America's history. The author does an excellent job of capturing the spirit and mood of those who were able to experience this phenomenon. I could not put "America's First Great Eclipse" down. After reading this book, I am even more excited to experience this summer's eclipse.

This book was very impressive in its historical research of the "first great eclipse." I enjoyed reading cover to cover, and because of this book I'll make the trek to see the solar eclipse on August 21st.

This is very accessible and a good primer on what it is to look forward to the 2017 Solar Eclipse we've been planning for two years.

Fantastic book on how astronomers tackled high altitude astronomy.

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