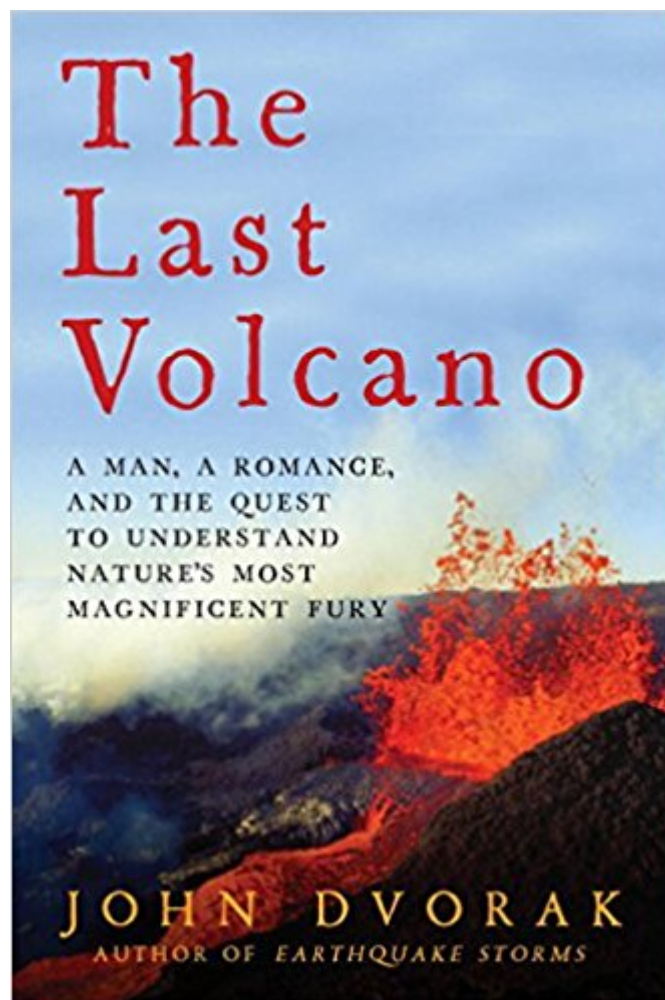




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# The Last Volcano: A Man, A Romance, And The Quest To Understand Nature's Most Magnificent Fury



## Synopsis

Ranging from Yellowstone in Wyoming to Mount Pelee in the Caribbean, from Bogoslof and Pavlov in Alaska, to Sakurajima in Japan, and, finally, to the massive volcanoes of Kilauea and Mauna Loa in Hawaii—The Last Volcano reveals the incredible journey of a man on a mission to understand the awesome power of volcanic eruptions. Volcanoes have fascinated and terrified people for ages. They have destroyed cities and ended civilizations. John Dvorak, the acclaimed author of Earthquake Storms, looks into the early scientific study of volcanoes and the life of the man who pioneered the field, Thomas Jaggar. Educated at Harvard, Jaggar went to the Caribbean after Mount Pelee exploded in 1902, killing more than 26,000 people. Witnessing the destruction and learning about the horrible deaths these people had suffered, Jaggar vowed to dedicate himself to a study of volcanoes. What followed was fifty years of global travel to eruptions in Italy, Alaska, Central America, Japan and the Pacific. In 1912, he built a small science station at the edge of a lake of molten lava at Kilauea volcano in the Hawaiian Islands, with the goal of solving the mystery of why volcanoes erupt and how they could be predicted. Jaggar found something else at Kilauea: true love. She was Isabel Maydwell, a widowed school teacher who came to Kilauea to restart her life. For more than twenty years, she and Jaggar ran the science station, living in a small house at the edge of a high cliff that overlooked the lava lake. Maydwell would quickly become one of the world's most astute observers of volcanic activity. Mixed with tales of myths and rituals, as well as the author's own experiences and insight into volcanic activity, The Last Volcano reveals the lure and romance of confronting nature in its most magnificent form—the edge of a volcanic eruption. Full color 8-page insert

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A lively biography of the forgotten father of volcanology. Dvorak is a great storyteller with a keen eye for details. There are parts in *The Last Volcano* where Mr. Dvorak’s descriptions of the intense heat almost singe the page. Riveting.” - Wall Street Journal

“Dvorak has done earthquake science sterling service by writing what is unarguably the best, the most comprehensive and compellingly readable book about the great fault that will one day affect all our lives.” - Simon Winchester, NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *KRAKTOA*

“Bubbling and sloughing under the surface of John Dvorak’s terrific new book *The Last Volcano* is the quietly terrifying reminder that we somehow manage to live on a tectonically active planet. A remarkable story. Every time Kilauea has bubbled and frothed and erupted since then, researchers on site have been indebted to Thomas Jaggar whether they knew it or not. And as for Yellowstone, it’s relatively quiet for the moment.” - Christian Science Monitor

“Dvorak brings not just a sharp understanding of the scientific issues involved, but also a humanist’s heart. He seeks to teach readers about volcanology and does so in terms that laypeople can comprehend and he makes us feel the excitement, the fear, and the intense heat of a lava flow. First-rate reporting and erudition underlie this successful effort to re-establish the reputation of an indispensable scientist.” - Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“Jaggar’s thrilling adventures to volcanic hot zones like Alaska and Hawaii, where he explored inside active volcanoes, makes one appreciate the fearless nature required for a life of volcanology. Riveting. It leaves readers wanting to know more about how volcanology has advanced since Jaggar’s day.” - The American Scholar

“For Dvorak, Kilauea is the last volcano, the one that will keep on erupting long after anyone who remembers Jaggar is gone. Fueled by a fire hose of molten rock from deep within the Earth, the volcano will continue to bubble and spurt and flame. And that’s just how Thomas Jaggar would see it despite all he’s seen and would have wanted it.” - The Dallas Morning News

“Dvorak layers mini-portraits in chronologically complex strata. Volcanos can seem like a distant threat. But Dvorak raises the stakes by examining a wider geologic network of earthquakes and tsunamis and a human network of scientists who truly saved lives. Their shared passion, and Dvorak’s own palpable love for the subject, send up sparks.” - The Star Tribune

“In this vividly written exploration of Jaggar’s life and work, Dvorak (*Earthquake Storms*, 2014) covers not only the early years of volcanology but also dives into what

propelled Jagger to fight so hard to learn more about volcanoes and the price he paid— a failed marriage and distant children— to gain that knowledge. Dvorak brings him to life in a richly researched narrative as thrilling as his topic, creating the sort of popular science history that flies off the shelves.

• - Booklist (starred review) — “Captivatingly chronicles the life and times of this vanguard scientist [Thomas Jagger]. Packed with details about Jagger’s personal as well as professional life.

• - Science News — “The story of Thomas Jagger and Isabel Maydwell is an inspiring tale of devotion, both to science and to each other.

• - Scientific American — “Reads like a good sci-fi, with colorful characters making startling discoveries.

• - The Honolulu Star — “A welcome addition. Its chief strength lies in combining the lives and personalities of key geologists and seismologists, such as Lawson, Charles Richter, John Tuzo Wilson and Kerry Sieh, with the theoretical essentials and practical details of their scientific work, so that the former really do illuminate the latter.

• - Geoscientist Magazine — “The real strength of Earthquake Storms is the clear and comprehensive treatment of geology as well as history, and offers a fascinating up-close look at the often overlooked people and stories behind science. Lastly, the book leaves readers in California with a bottom line as sobering as it is unassailable: We might not know exactly what storms lie ahead, but during all of our lifetimes, we have only ever known the lull.

• - Susan Hough, former director of the Seismology Laboratory at CalTech, EARTH Magazine

Originally trained as a lunar scientist, John Dvorak, PhD, spent twenty years operating a large telescope at Mauna Kea for the Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii. His writing has appeared as cover stories for Scientific American, Astronomy and Physics Today. His books include Earthquake Storms and The Last Volcano, both available from Pegasus Books.

Volcano lovers and anyone interested in the history of volcanology will find this book about the life and times of Dr. Thomas Jagger both informative and entertaining. In the book’s opening paragraphs, author John Dvorak captures the reader’s imagination with an image of a tattered ship “seemingly without purpose or crew” adrift near the small Caribbean island of Martinique. We learn that the Roddam was overtaken by the eruption cloud from Mount Pelee, which destroyed the city of St. Pierre in 1902, killing about 30,000 people. In subsequent chapters, Dvorak explains in remarkable detail how that disaster redirected the life and career of the book’s central character, Dr. Thomas Jagger. Intent on reducing losses from future eruptions, Jagger a decade later established the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory at the summit of Kilauea volcano, setting the standard for

modern volcano studies. The Last Volcano is rich in historical details told through the personal lives of Jaggar and his contemporaries. It's an adventure story, a romance, and a historical narrative rolled into one. What's not to like?

Sometimes the story line seemed a littler disjointed as the author tried to put things in context as well as quickly switching to a new topic which sometimes seemed should be a new chapter or section vice a new paragraph. Love the subject matter and history behind the Hawaii volcanoes. Fills in the history that provides a better understanding of thing places we saw on our 2 trips to the big island. First trip was in the 80s when Kilauea was active with flows near the chain of craters road near the new visitor center that was destroyed the previous year. Walked out on the cooled lava flow, both during the day and at night and stood next to flowing pahoehoe.

“The Last Volcano” focuses on Dr. Thomas Augustus Jaggar, Jr., a visionary geologist who greatly influenced the emerging science of volcanology in the early 20th century. He strongly advocated the establishment of permanent observatories to regularly monitor volcanic phenomena before, during, and after eruptions, to obtain the basic scientific data needed to predict eruptions and to reduce volcanic risks. In pursuit of his vision, Thomas Jaggar founded in 1912 the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO) at the summit of Kilauea, one of the world’s most active volcanoes. In this book, John Dvorak summarizes in readable, non-technical language the pivotal roles played by Jaggar and associates to establish HVO. Dvorak also traces the scientific achievements of HVO, as it grew from a tiny wooden structure with few staff to the well-staffed, world-class facility that it is today. Many of the volcano-monitoring techniques currently used worldwide were originally developed and tested at HVO. As a former staff member of HVO during the mid-1970s, I of course was quite aware of Jaggar’s legacy. However, from reading the book even I learned many fascinating, previously little-known, aspects of Jaggar’s scientific and, in particular, his personal life. Dvorak has done a great service in producing a comprehensive narrative that deftly interweaves available information about Thomas Jaggar the visionary as well as the remarkable (perhaps even romantic?) man that he was in his time. I highly recommend this book to anyone fascinated by volcanic eruptions and how they are studied in Hawaii or anywhere else in the world. Robert I. Tilling, Scientist Emeritus, USGS Volcano Science Center

This is one book that appeals to both rock hounds and to those missing rocks between their ears alike. My wife had checked it out from the library and said I might like it. Read the first page and was hooked from the start. The story begins with the first investigations of volcanoes that let fly and the horrific results. It lets you in on the study of volcanoes and the transformation of geologist turned volcanologist from the start of organized research. But this book is so much more than just a story about volcanoes and it leads you through the life and changes that take place over time and a family. Read this book from first page to last to better understand the science and sacrifice that is so deftly brought to life by the author. Put it in our Rock & Gem Club library and it does not stay on the shelf - fantastic read!

This is an excellent historical biography, with plenty of action and drama. The broader picture of geology, volcano studies, and even academic and Hawaiian politics is a great backdrop. The book could have used some better editing for grammar and typos, but they are only minor toe-stubbing events, probably only of importance to nit-picking professors who teach writing-intensive science classes (like me).

Interesting treatise on the man's life chasing volcanoes and reads like a novel. Though he wasn't very nice to his first wife, he clearly traded a family life for excitement and determination in learning everything he could about magma and resulting volcanoes, especially Kilauea!

Loving this book. Learning so much and it is wonderfully written.

I wanted to learn more about Dr. Jaggar and Hawaii Volcanoes Observatory and this book surpassed my expectations. The detail and story-like exposition makes this a great page turner that goes over one of Science's most fascinating unsung heroes and his crew of colleagues.

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