
Landscape as religious text is the theme of this engaging personal testimony. Although many have viewed the Great Basin in Nevada and western Utah as a vast wasteland, the author, a geographer, says, “I feel more closely connected to the universe here than in other places.” In search of the roots of the unique spirit of place that makes this vast desert region so compelling to him, the author delves deeply into the Basin’s physical features and history, from Native American sacred places to early Mormon communities and, finally, to the “terrible swift sword” of A-bomb testing there.

Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect: An Account of the Gardenmaker’s Life, 1885–1971, Revised Edition, by Robin Karson; Amherst, Massachusetts: Library of American Landscape History, 2003; 321 pages, $34.95. Fletcher Steele worked almost exclusively for private clients, and the arc of his career is rather flat. But his brilliant manipulation of traditional garden forms and his design innovations are of enduring interest. First published in 1989, Robin Karson’s Steele monograph is updated and corrected for this edition. Most readily apparent are the new graphic design, which gives the historic photographs and drawings room to breathe on the page, and the typography; both are fresh and first-rate.

Stone in the Garden: Inspiring Designs and Practical Projects, by Gordon Hayward; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003; 240 pages, $39.95. This book, written by a nationally acclaimed garden designer, is attractively illustrated and full of practical information. It’s a good how-to guide for those wanting to install a fieldstone walkway, create a naturalistic garden pool, or build a stone retaining wall. Plant lists are included so that the final stone project will complement, or serve as the basis for, a garden.