



Water from Stone: The Story of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve (Louise Lindsey Merrick Natural Environment Series)

Jeffrey Greene

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Award-winning author Jeffrey Greene provides a portrait, by turns lyrical and provocative, of J. David Bamberger's unlikely transformation from first, a vacuum cleaner salesman, then to co-founder and CEO of Church's Fried Chicken, to an internationally recognized conservationist. In fact, Greene tells two integrally related stories: the evolution of one man's business sense, applying profit incentives to land restoration and nature conservancy; and the creation of a Texas Hill Country preserve where he effectively demonstrates his own principles.

Growing up in rural Ohio during the Great Depression and World War II, Bamberger learned at an early age to shun waste, grow food productively, and admire the Amish for living in harmony with the land. His mother taught him to love the natural world and gave him a book that would set the course for his life: Pleasant Valley, by Louis Bromfield, a visionary American advocate for land restoration. Inspired by his new role model, Bamberger would say, "If I ever make money, I want to do what Bromfield did."

After finding that financial success, Bamberger bought what he describes as "the sorriest piece of land in Blanco County" and entered upon his decades-long effort to restore the ecological balance of 5,500 acres that had been virtually destroyed by more than a century of misuse. Naming his preserve Selah—from the Old Testament term meaning "pause and reflect"—Bamberger dedicates himself and his resources to protecting species and educating school children, conservation groups, government officials, and everyone else who will listen to his central message, delivered with evangelical zeal: We must take care of the earth, and anyone can help.

Today, David and his wife, Margaret, have received many awards, and he has been featured in The New Yorker, in Audubon, and on CNN and network news. But until now, no one has fully told the story of how a man with vision transformed a place—and in doing so, transformed himself.



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