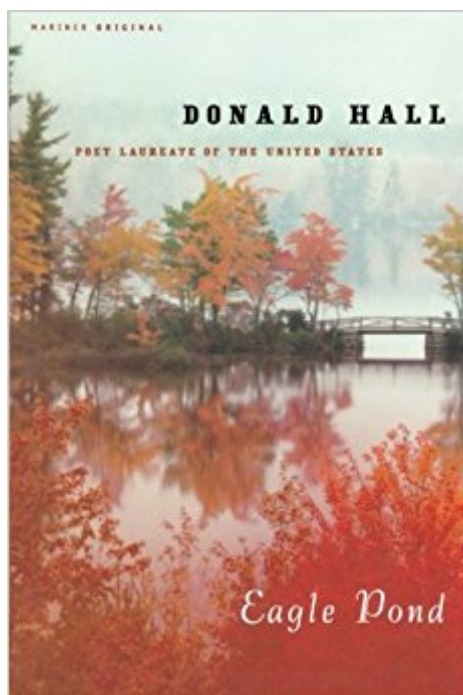


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Eagle Pond



Synopsis

This original paperback brings together for the first time all of Donald Hall's writing on Eagle Pond Farm, his ancestral home in New Hampshire, where he visited his grandparents as a young boy and then lived with his wife, the poet Jane Kenyon, until her death. It includes the entire, previously published *Seasons at Eagle Pond* and *Here at Eagle Pond*; the poem "Daylilies on the Hill" from *The Painted Bed*; and several uncollected pieces. In these tender essays, Hall tells of the joys and quiddities of life on the farm, the pleasures and discomforts of a world in which the year has four seasons -- maple sugar, blackfly, Red Sox, and winter. Lyrical, comic, and elegaic, they sing of a landscape and culture that are disappearing under the assault of change.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

DONALD HALL, who served as poet laureate of the United States from 2006 to 2007, is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a recipient of the National Medal of the Arts, awarded by the president.

Read a bit of this book whenever you feel the need for peaceful images in your mind.

When I was growing up in suburban New York, my parents sent me to a summer camp in rural New Hampshire for a number of summers. During these summers, I fell in love with the beauty and ruggedness of New Hampshire. I spent my summers riding horses, hiking mountains and swimming

in ice cold lakes. I also spent my summers swatting mosquitoes and battling poison ivy. Donald Hall's anthology, *Eagle Pond*, brought back memories of these summers long gone, evoking memories both sweet and bitter-sweet. Hall's writing is lyrical and poetic, using words sparingly to evoke sounds, thoughts and memories. His commentary on the shallowness of our lives when they are based purely on the present and lack historical depth is right on target. I wish that I had read Hall's works separately. Unfortunately, they do not work too well together in anthology form. There is too much repetition, which sometimes gets annoying. This repetition is necessary if each volume stands alone, but it becomes redundant in anthology form. This does not decrease the beauty of the writing, but it does lessen the beauty of the book as a whole.

Marvelous, humorous, laconic look at life in New Hampshire seasons by eminent New Englander, prizewinning poet and essayist Donald Hall. If your family keeps everything, you will love this book. If you are from Vermont, you won't. But you must delight in Donald Hall.

When I saw Donald Hall's photo on the cover of "Poets and Writers Magazine," I was surprised to learn that his *Eagle Pond* sanctuary was next door to a family estate in Bristol, New Hampshire. It is possible in reading "Eagle Pond" to vector into his location on Route 4 because he has offered such a rich sense of place that he covers his territory with precision and insight much like a surveyor or a farmer mending a stone wall with a neighbor in spring. There is the gentleman farmer about this poet and he seems steeped in the Breadloaf School tradition of Robert Frost in that his poetry is vivid, realistic and naturalistic in the same way, for example, that Seamus Heaney wants you to understand rural Ireland first-hand. Donald Hall is more than infatuated, he's in love with the sense of place which New Hampshire uniquely affords. He views many parts of this state as authentically American with roots tracing back to the Revolution among soldiers who fought and then moved north to carve out hard lives by yanking granite boulders from their fields, cutting back the woods and farming. He's right: you need to be a hardy soul to persevere in the winters of deep snow and 30 below zero wind chills. He is sensitive to the history of the place and the contributions that past generations have made and upon whose shoulders he now stands. This is an erudite soul: Harvard, Oxford, Stanford and yet he eschews the wealth and privilege normally associated with such elite bastions of learning. This is a Poet Laureate of the Common Man with a Walt Whitman face like the Old Man of the Mountain: the language is clear, precise, inspired and lyrical. There is definitely redundancy among the essays, which may require some patience, but I preferred to view them as leitmotifs, which repeat for emphasis and improvisation like a jazz standard. I would have edited this

work differently to eliminate some of the redundancies of stand-alone pieces combined into a single anthology but so what? Hall complains a great deal about Flatlanders, who drive their BMWs up to the country when the weather is fair to escape the heat and complexity of life in the big city in Boston and New York during July and August, and to ski at Ragged Mountain during winter holidays. Yet Hall is a Flatlander whose roots spring north, leaning toward the light, from Hamden, CT, near New Haven. He has a great deal to say about Woodstock, Vermont, of which he is not an admirer and about developers who build condos after tearing down what is ancient and, therefore, authentic in New England in order to erect pseudo-Yankee retirement dwellings for those who come from away and don't seem to know any better. I was surprised to hear a Poet Laureate badmouth his next door New England neighbors with such vehemence but there it was in print for all the world to see. Donald Hall wants you to know what it means to live authentically in New Hampshire and what it's like to attend Old Home Week and Town Meetings and meet at the Grange. He wants you to know about the railroad, which is no longer there, and what it means to suffer as a long-time Red Sox fan even among the greatness of Ted Williams, Jackie Jenson and Carl Yazstremski. The net effect of the writing is that he presents a quaint and disappearing provincial view of old Yankee New Hampshire, mournful for its passing as its past was so rich and quaint and authentic. The most intriguing innovation in this writing appeared in his chapter entitled "Fifty People Talking" which delivers a few sentences of narrative spoken in their natural dialect about their quotidian lives near Eagle Pond in Danbury, Andover, Wilmot Flats, New London and Bristol. This is genuinely inspired writing as one perceives in the text and context of the pure narrative the real authenticity that he seeks all along in "Eagle Pond." William Gaddis took a similar approach in his genius work, "JR," which helped him to win a couple of National Book Awards. He writes about typically New England subjects such as black flies, maple sugar season, blizzards, stone walls, the American Revolution and Civil War, rural Republican tradition, clearing the land, keeping up a farm house, progress or the lack thereof, the seasons, especially autumn and winter, city folks, the Red Sox, church, Yankee history, relics of bygone days, cellar holes, his dog, Gus, local haunts for breakfast, Mt. Kearsage and Ragged Mountain, back roads, newspaper delivery, Yankee thrift and ingenuity, the lengths to which forefathers went to survive self-reliantly, surveying land by compass, gathering hay and everyday conversations with neighbors. The net effect of this book is to give one a strong, positive sense of place about Eagle Pond in New Hampshire and Hall accomplishes this feat admirably just as Frost and Heaney do in their poetry and as Faulkner did in his fiction. If you ever wondered what it's like to live as a rugged individualist in the woods of New England, then read Thoreau, Robert Frost and Donald Hall. "Eagle Pond" is a beautiful book and only a great writer could have crafted it

so nobly and with such a rich sensibility for a place where authentic old Yankee America suffers to endure.

National treasure living here in New Hampshire on Eagle Pond. I fish with my kids on Eagle Pond quite frequently and have seen him around but never knew who he was until I saw him shaking the hand of President Obama. Now, I'm reading all his books, starting with Eagle Pond. Hope to see him this summer and get his autograph!

I have always wanted to visit New England. This book just gives me more incentive to do so. Love his family history and the seasonal musings of the author. The winters sound daunting to this southern girl...but spring-early autumn make up for that! Now I just have to plan my route.

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