



Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death: The Impact of America's First Climate Crisis

John V. H. Dippel

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A major meteorological event profoundly affected our nation's development in 1816. This book shows how this weather phenomenon acted as an accelerator of trends which were just emerging in the early 19th-century: a trend toward greater democracy and the spread of information; settlement of the Western frontier; use of the scientific method to investigate and understand natural phenomena; questioning of long-held religious beliefs as a result of increased knowledge; and industrialization as the means to expand the scope and wealth of the United States. Like all my books, *America's First Climate Crisis* is written in an accessible, engaging style, using anecdotes and thumbnail sketches to evoke the mood and important personalities of the day. While thoroughly researched, the book avoids the pitfalls of academic writing, and letters and diary entries add a warm tone to a very chilly narrative. The book is organized around various consequences of the disastrous harvests of 1816: after outlining the nature and scope of this calamity, I describe how it brought about a massive exodus to the Ohio Valley and shift in political and economic might to that region; how it undermined the once-unquestioned authority of New England's Federalist establishment; how it gave greater credence to scientific explanations for weather events and disasters; how it compelled New England merchants to abandon their opposition to manufacturing; and how it helped create a modern awareness of humanity's place in the universe.

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