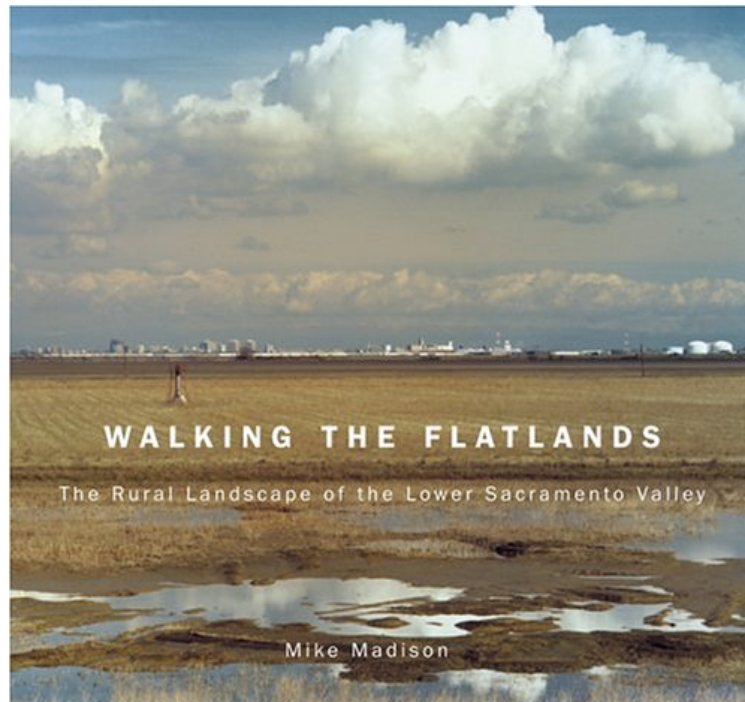


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## Walking the Flatlands: The Rural Landscape of the Lower Sacramento Valley (Great Valley Book)

*Mike Madison*

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**Mike Madison : Walking the Flatlands: The Rural Landscape of the Lower Sacramento Valley (Great Valley Book)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Walking the Flatlands: The Rural Landscape of the Lower Sacramento Valley (Great Valley Book):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Thomas Jefferson's Yeoman Farmer Ideal Citizen in the 21st CenturyBy Paul F.If the spirit of Thomas Jefferson wanted to meet a 21st-century version of his 'Yeoman Farmer Ideal Citizen,' he would find Mike Madison to be a perfect choice. I can readily imagine the spirit of Jefferson enthusiastically and delightedly discussing with Madison the various topics covered in this book as the book was being created.Due to dyslexia, I generally find reading to be an arduous and mentally exhausting activity; however, as soon as I noticed that the book was just enough wider than it was high in order to classify it as being in the symbolically suitable "landscape format," I realized that Madison's very thorough attention to detail extended well beyond merely putting words down on paper. I was further reassured when I saw that the Table of Contents named four of the early chapters for the classical elements of EARTH, WATER, AIR and FIRE. (Most of the twelve chapters have single word titles. the three exceptions are three words of graffiti from a beloved, old, rural bridge, and the bookend chapters at the beginning and the end of the book: READING THE LANDSCAPE and THE EXPERIENCE OF LANDSCAPE).Madison has an unusual ability to present seemingly mundane things from an unexpectedly rich and revealing perspective, an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge, and the ability to write in an extraordinarily

clear and informative manner. When I first thumbed through the book, I saw a lot of words and some old black-and-white historical photographs which I immediately dismissed. When I actually proceeded to read the book (at a pace akin to a farmer walking through his fields), about one-third of the way into the book (at the beginning of the chapter titled AGRICULTURE), one of the photos triggered a visceral sense of fear . . . as if I had just discovered structures built by an alien species that was quietly taking over the planet (the "alien species" in this case being agribusiness absentee landowners). I almost skipped the AGRICULTURE chapter because it is three to five times as long as the other chapters, and I couldn't imagine the topic being particularly interesting to a city kid like me, but I had learned to trust Madison's writing and ultimately found the chapter to be one of the most interesting in the book (in spite of the scary agribusiness photos). Another unexpectedly fascinating chapter titled MACHINES gives a glimpse of Madison's humor when he briefly describes the impact that the sounds of machines have on the environment. "There is an aesthetics of sounds. The Italians like their cars tuned to a high, strained, pitch, like a tenor whose trousers are too tight." He continues with sentences about American automobiles, Japanese motor cycles, and Harley-Davidsons. The chapter titled TOWN presents wise and insightful recommendations for how the main town in the district should handle its transition into being a small city. This TOWN chapter should be required reading for all present and future members of the city council, and I whole-heartedly hope that the chapter's recommendations are brought to fruition. I am "tone deaf" to philosophical writings so I don't know if Madison should be called a philosopher or not, but he is certainly a gifted observer, thinker, and commenter; and reading his immensely well-informed and thoughtful book has enriched my life. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Chelicera Enjoyed it, and learned tons of stuff besides! Awesome.

Cultural Writing. Photography. Mike Madison delivers a detailed critique of the farmland around him, the land he walks daily. He is immersed in a sea of intricate and interwoven systems; he sees where the soil shifts from black to red, how the wind is battled, and the inevitability of change. He moves from thoughtfulness to heights of lyricism as the love for his home pours from his words. Madison continues the tradition of Wendell Berry and Thoreau, often matching both in rural intelligence and ecstasy.

"This book is not as innocent as it seems." -- Kenneth E. F. Watt, professor emeritus of ecology studies at UC Davis  
About the Author Mike Madison, his wife, Diane, and their two daughters operate a small truck farm near Davis, California.