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The Amazing Crawfish Boat (Folklore Studies In A Multicultural World Series)



Synopsis

In any given year, the Louisiana crawfish harvest tops 50,000 tons. The Amazing Crawfish Boat chronicles the development of an amphibious boat that transformed the Louisiana prairies into alternating fields of aquaculture and agriculture. In seeking to understand how such a machine came into being, John Laudun describes the ideas and traditions that have long been a part of the Louisiana landscape and how they converged at a particular moment in time to create a new economic opportunity for both the rice farmers who used them and the fabricators who made them. Walking fields with farmers and working in shops with fabricators, Laudun gives readers a rich portrait of the Louisiana prairies and the people who live and work on them. The Amazing Crawfish Boat seeks to unearth the complex mix of folk cultures that underlie a variety of traditions that are now seen as native to an area populated not just by Cajuns but also by Germans and other groups. Over the years, this diverse mix of cultures has produced an astonishing set of artifacts that demonstrate not only their ability to adapt, but their ability to innovate, and the crawfish boat is a great example of such creativity produced by individuals deeply embedded in their culture and place. While the lives of artists and scientists have been examined for what they tell us about innovation, The Amazing Crawfish Boat seeks to address creativity as part of a larger cultural complex of ideas and behaviors. To ascertain this inventiveness, Laudun examines the historical and cultural trends that led to this creation, drawing from archives, oral histories, and ethnographic accounts. He investigates the shops and sheds where farmers and fabricators work, revealing the immense imagination and intelligence that lie behind the bolts, welds, and hydraulic lines that hold the boats together and, in so doing, hold a way of life together.

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