

DREAMS OF EL DORADO

H. W. BRANDS

READ BY MATTHEW KUGLER

By the time he became president in 1801, Thomas Jefferson had been looking west for decades. He saw the country's population expanding and judged that America must expand too, lest the new nation become as crowded and conflict-prone as Europe. When Napoleon, to Jefferson's surprise, offered to sell French Louisiana to the United States, Jefferson leaped at the offer and launched America on a fateful and fraught journey west.

In *Dreams of El Dorado*, H. W. Brands tells the thrilling, panoramic story of the settling of the American West, from Lewis and Clark's expedition in the early nineteenth century to the closing of the frontier by the early twentieth. He introduces us to explorers, mountain men, cowboys, missionaries, and soldiers, taking us from John Jacob Astor's fur trading campaign in Oregon to the Texas Revolution, from the California gold rush to the Oklahoma land rush. Throughout, Brands explores the contradictions of the West and explodes its long-standing myths. The West has been celebrated as the proving ground of American individualism; in reality, the West depended on collective action and federal largesse more than any other region. The West brought out the finest and the basest in those who ventured there, evoking both selfless heroism and unspeakable violence. Visions of great wealth drew generations of Americans westward, but El Dorado was never more elusive than in the West.

Balanced, authoritative, and masterfully told, *Dreams of El Dorado* sets a new standard for histories of the American West.

"A subject this monumental demands prose to match it, and I am pleased to report that, in this sprawling epic, H. W. Brands is at his sparkling best. He is of the American West and grew up in its myths, which may explain why he writes about it with such passion and clarity."

—S. C. GWYNNE, *New York Times*-bestselling author of
Empire of the Summer Moon and *Rebel Yell*

H. W. BRANDS holds the Jack S. Blanton Sr. chair in history at the University of Texas at Austin. A *New York Times*-bestselling author, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in biography for *The First American* and *Traitor to His Class*. He lives in Austin, Texas.

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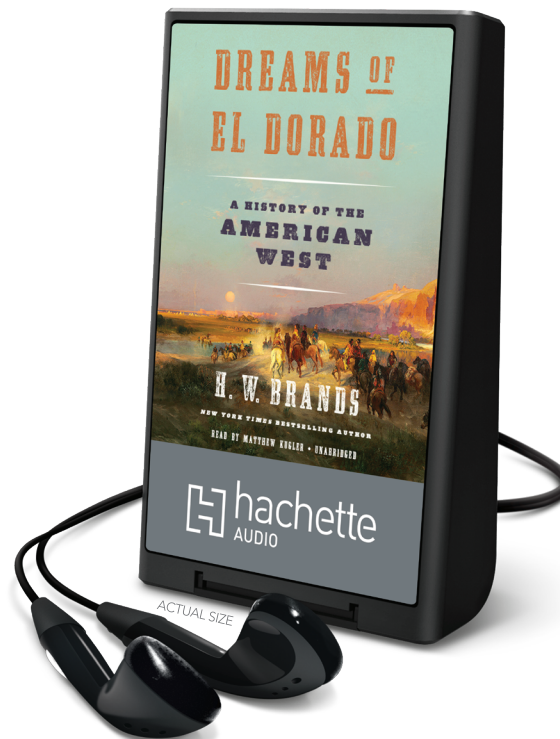
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