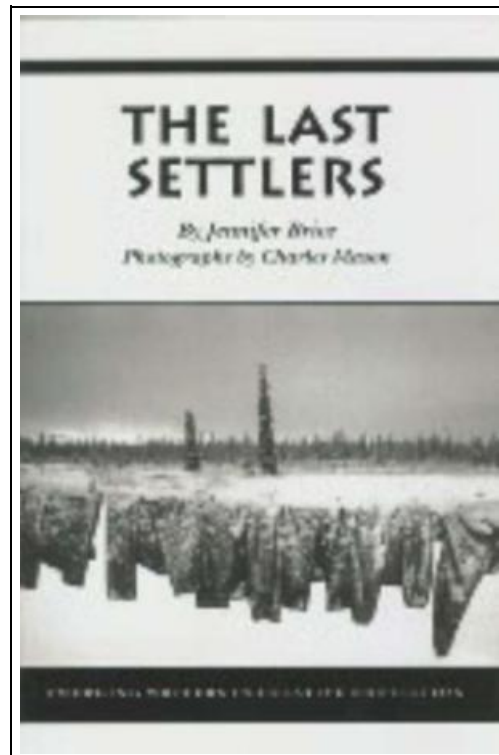


The Last Settlers



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THE LAST SETTLERS



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Duquesne University Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The Last Settlers, Jennifer Brice, Charles Mason, When Jennifer Brice and Charles Mason began this project in 1991, examining the lives of two 20th century pioneer families in the Alaskan wilderness, neither realized that they were documenting the ending of American migration to the frontier. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner declared the closing of the American frontier, because westering settlement was lapping at the shore of the Pacific Ocean. However, the federal Homestead Act remained in effect for nearly a century in Alaska, and in 1934 the Homesite Act was enacted, providing up to five acres of preselected land to settlers committed to living on it. In 1981, blocks of land totalling 30,000 acres near Lake Minchumina were opened to homesites, businesses and mineral leases. Two Years later, 10,250 acres in eastern Alaska, near the Ahtna village of Slana, were opened to settlement as well. Would-be settlers besieged the Fairbanks office of the Bureau of Land Management with letters and phone calls. Over time, however, the hype and the illusions have faded. Fewer than 100 people now make their homes on what is truly the last federal frontier. Of these few last settlers, two families, the Hannans and the Spears, are at the centre of this clear, unsentimental portrait of people whose daily existence is forged out of the crucible of myth. The wilderness surrounding Minchumina and Slana has little in common with conventional beauty, this book tells us. Some patches of it, as Brice says, look downright blighted, bringing to mind the prophet Jeremiah's description of wilderness that was desolate because no man layeth it to heart.' The Last Settlers is the story of unbeautiful land and the people who have laid it to heart.



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