

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910466256803321
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Titolo	The Draining of the Fens : Projectors, Popular Politics, and State Building in Early Modern England / / Eric H. Ash
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Baltimore : , : Johns Hopkins University Press, , 2017 Baltimore, Md. : , : Project MUSE, , 2017 ©2017
ISBN	1-4214-2201-8
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (415 pages)
Collana	Johns Hopkins studies in the history of technology
Disciplina	942.6
Soggetti	HISTORY / Renaissance TECHNOLOGY & ENGINEERING / History HISTORY / Europe / Great Britain SCIENCE / History Government, Resistance to - England - History Political development - Social aspects - England - History Reclamation of land - England - Fens, The - History Drainage - England - Fens, The - History Electronic books. Great Britain Politics and government 1603-1649 Great Britain Politics and government 1558-1603 Fens, The (England) Politics and government Fens, The (England) Environmental conditions Fens, The (England) History 17th century Fens, The (England) History 16th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Introduction: The Unrecovered Country : Draining the Land, Building the State -- Part I. Popular Politics, Crown Authority, and the Rise of the Projector -- Land and Life in the Pre-Drainage Fens -- State Building in the Fens, 1570-1607 -- The Crisis of Local Governance, 1609-1616 -- The Struggle to Forge Consensus, 1617-1621 -- Part II. Drainage

Projects, Violent Resistance, and State Building -- Draining the Hatfield Level, 1625-1636 -- The First Great Level Drainage, 1630-1642 -- Riot, Civil War, and Popular Politics in the Hatfield Level, 1640-1656 -- The Second Great Level drainage, 1649-1656 -- Epilogue: The Once and Future Fens : Unintended Consequences in an Artificial Landscape -- Glossary.

Sommario/riassunto

"This book is a political, social, and environmental history of the many attempts to drain the Fens of eastern England during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both the early failures and the eventual successes. Fen drainage projects were supposed to transform hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands into dry farmland capable of growing grain and other crops, and also reform the sickly, backward fenland inhabitants into civilized, healthy farmers, to the benefit of the entire commonwealth. Fenlanders, however, viewed the drainage as a grave threat to their local landscape, economy, and way of life. At issue were two different understandings of the Fens, what they were and ought to be; the power to define the Fens in the present was the power to determine their future destiny. The drainage projects, and the many conflicts they incited, illustrate the ways in which politics, economics, and ecological thought intersected at a time when attitudes toward both the natural environment and the commonwealth were shifting. Promoted by the crown, endorsed by agricultural improvement advocates, undertaken by English and Dutch projectors, and opposed by fenland commoners, the drainage of the Fens provides a fascinating locus to study the process of state building in early modern England, and the violent popular resistance it sometimes provoked. In exploring the many challenges the English faced in re-conceiving and re-creating their Fens, this book addresses important themes of environmental, political, economic, social, and technological history, and reveals new dimensions of the evolution of early modern England into a modern, unitary, capitalist state"--
