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## "Marsh at Cravairola: Boundary-Making in the Italo-Swiss Alps"

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Lowenthal, David. "Marsh at Cravairola: Boundary-Making in the Italo-Swiss Alps." *Environment and History* 10, no. 2, "The Nature of G.P. Marsh: Tradition and Historical Judgement" special issue (May, 2004): 205–35. [doi:10.3197/0967340041159795](https://doi.org/10.3197/0967340041159795). George Perkins Marsh, United States minister to Italy, renowned as a linguist and a geographer, was a fitting choice to be named arbiter of a disputed Italo-Swiss boundary segment, the alpe of Cravairola, north of Domodossola and west of Locarno, in 1874. Although Cravairola was on the eastern (Swiss) side of the mountain chain, it was owned and used seasonally, for pasturage and timber, by villagers from two Italian communes. Logging and the flotation of timber were devastating the Swiss torrent of the Rovana and the Val Maggia below. This essay reproduces Marsh's authentic text, printed here for the first time from his own manuscript. It also recounts the boundary dispute's history, Marsh's inspection of the area with the two countries' agents, the issues at stake, and the reasons Marsh awarded the territory in question to Italy. Ancient and uncontested claims of jurisdiction over the area by Italian communes in Marsh's view had to take precedence over the best interests of both countries in terms of access, land management and watershed conservation. Subsequent critiques query Marsh's analysis but confirm its importance as a legal precedent in boundary arbitration. All rights reserved. © 2004 The White Horse Press

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