A skeleton frozen in time...
...preserved in a sage plateau of toothed and twisted formations...
...uncovered in a Magic Valley dammed for irrigation...
...reveals a timeless chaos—a nature more complex than Darwin once imagined, a process both fitful and catastrophic that shaped the progress of civilization as desert landscapes evolved.

Cover

Hipparion primigenium from Höwenegg Quarry, Germany. Now extinct, this European three-toed horse is a descendant of the North American “dawn-horse” that migrated to Eurasia ten million years ago, thus anticipating the later migration of the modern horse, one-toed Equus, by 7.5 million years.

Photos

Shoshone Falls on the Snake River. Previous pages: Little City of Rocks near Gooding, Milner Dam tunnel construction, Twin Falls County, 1905.
secrets of the magic valley and hagerman’s remarkable horse

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Balloon-framed barn, Twin Falls County
Idaho's Magic Valley

Known for fossils and bizarre geology, the Magic Valley spreads like a grassy canvas at the base of the Northern Rockies—a fabled El Dorado and passage to the Oregon Country, a shrub steppe now flooded for agribusiness, for barley, potatoes, alfalfa, dairy feedlots, sheep and horse ranching, and commercial trout. Left: the Lewis Fork of the Columbia, or Snake River, drains Idaho territory in A. W. Tanner's Atlas of the United States (1862).
Secrets of the Magic Valley began with the realization that history, like evolutionary science, is narrative simplification. Just as Charles Darwin presented his data as progress through competition, the history of America’s West is a pageant traditionally skewed as a sequence of heroic events. Our book about horse and Man in Idaho’s magical desert suggests alternative views. Collectively written, the project evolved from seven research essays anthologized as *A Natural History of the Hagerman National Monument* (2002), edited by Kathryn Baxter and available from Black Canyon Communications.

Thousand Springs near Hagerman