Preface

I have long been fascinated by the Pacific. As a child, I grew up in Seattle during the 1940s and 1950s, decades noted for the dominance of the Boeing Company in the Pacific Northwest. During those years, my father captained a fishing vessel that pioneered in the opening of Alaska’s king crab industry, and I had the opportunity to visit the north on several occasions. I attended college and graduate school on the Pacific Coast, mainly in northern California, during the 1960s and early 1970s, a time when Silicon Valley was booming, beefed up by Cold War defense contracts. My interest in Japan dates back to the 1950s. Trawling in the North Pacific, my father came into close contact with Japanese fishermen, trading American cigarettes for Japanese curios. Later, in the 1980s, I spent two years living with my family in southern Japan, where I taught in Fukuoka and Hiroshima as a Fulbright Lecturer and learned about Japanese society. Traveling to and from Japan, I stopped over in the Hawaiian Islands, and during the 1990s I had the opportunity on several occasions to teach on Maui for the University of Hawaii—experiences that brought me into close contact with a broad range of Pacific Islanders, including Chamorros transplanted from Guam and American Samoans.

My professional work, including this volume, has allowed me to combine interests in business, environmental, and urban history with an abiding concern for the history of the American West and the Pacific. Many of my books have explored intersections of these fields. There have been, we shall see, commonalities in the development of the United States’ Pacific possessions. Those commonalities have been perhaps nowhere more striking than in interactions in economic and environmental decision making. However, there have also been marked regional patterns of development within this vast area; after all, the Pacific covers one-third of the globe and has always been complex. Yet, especially with several forms of economic and geopolitical integration that have taken place since World War II, it is possible to
begin thinking of the Pacific, including American possessions there, as one region.

It would be easy to romanticize developments in the Pacific. I remember many wonderful moments spent living there: sailing part of the Inside Passage to Alaska in a small open boat as a teenager, a voyage cut short, however, by a summer gale; eating Dungeness crabs from the shell in northern California; and swimming in ocean swells off white-sand beaches near Fukuoka. There is another side to the Pacific. Until very recently, and even now in much of the region, the economy evolved as a boom-and-bust affair based on extractive industries, just as that of the American West did in the 1800s. I am one of those who can recall, during a recession in the early 1970s, a billboard on Interstate Highway 90 on the eastern outskirts of Seattle that read, “Will the Last Person Leaving Please Turn Out the Lights?”

It is on the interactions between economic developments, environmental issues, and political decision making that this volume focuses. My study casts a wide net. Ranging from the sun-kissed beaches of the Hawaiian archipelago to the snow-swept shores of the Aleutian Islands and from congested Silicon Valley to rural Guam, it looks at contests over the exploitation of natural resources, land-use issues, and urban planning, among other matters. Beyond individual regional topics lie general debates and decisions over quality-of-life concerns. By looking at this array of issues, my book captures both the commonalities and the complexities of the changes that have occurred throughout the Pacific possessions of the United States.

Few scholarly studies are truly individual efforts, for most build on the works of others, especially in the field of history. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who helped bring this work to fruition. David Lincove, the history librarian at The Ohio State University, aided me in tracking down many elusive sources, as did librarians at the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa and librarians at the Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington. Dirk Ballendorf, James Bartholomew, William Childs, Stewart Firth, Hal Friedman, James Kraft, William McCloskey, Lucy Murphy, Daniel Nelson, Darrin Pratt, Dorothy Pyle, Robert Rogers, Mark Rose, Randy Roth, David Stebenne, Tetsuo Taka, William Tsutsui, Richard Tucker, and Judy Wu read and commented on earlier drafts of all or parts of this study. More generally, I would like to thank my colleagues at Ohio State for providing a stimulating and collegial environment in which to work. I am indebted to the College of Humanities of The Ohio State University for
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Finally, I must say a few words about languages. I have followed standard practices in including diacritic marks in words wherever they are called for, but I have not added them when they did not appear in the original, as in quotations or book titles. I have chosen to write Japanese names with the given name first and the surname second, adhering to English-language practice, which is the reverse of that in Japanese.