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With thirteen new chapters, *Let It Shine* is a fully revised and expanded edition of *A Golden Thread*, Perlin's classic history of solar technology, detailing the past forty years of technological developments driving today's solar renaissance. This unique and compelling compendium of humankind's solar ideas tells the fascinating story of how our predecessors throughout time, again and again, have applied the sun to better their lives — and how we can too.

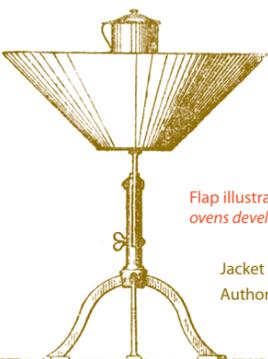


An international expert on solar energy and forestry, **JOHN PERLIN** has lectured extensively on these topics in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Perlin is the author of *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization* as well as *From Space to Earth: The Story of Solar Electricity*. Perlin mentors those involved in realizing photovoltaic, solar hot-water, and energy-efficiency technologies at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), and coordinates the California Space Grant Consortium as a member of UCSB's Department of Physics.

[www.john-perlin.com](http://www.john-perlin.com)

Flap illustrations: Nineteenth-century portable solar ovens developed for French troops in Africa

Jacket design by Tracy Cunningham  
Author photo by Tony Mastres



## PRAISE FOR *LET IT SHINE*

"John Perlin is *the* historian of solar energy. He now takes the history back thousands of years to early Chinese architecture and the *yang-sui*, the little bronze mirrors boys used to start the family fire, to nineteenth-century inventors who feared that coal supplies were about to run out, to modern passive solar buildings and today's falling costs and growing use of photovoltaics. He does all this with a penchant for the diverse characters along the journey and with remarkable illustrations that vividly capture the six-thousand-year story of solar energy."

— Daniel Yergin, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World* and *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*

"With remarkable depth, breadth, and precision, John Perlin lays out humankind's long reliance on the sun before the carbon era and points the way to a healthy, comfortable, productive, resilient solar-powered world. There is more intelligence and common sense in this volume than in all the federal reports on energy of the last quarter-century combined."

— Denis Hayes, former director of the federal Solar Energy Research Institute and founder of the Earth Day Network

"The authoritative background story behind the worldwide solar revolution, *Let It Shine* is a story of human ingenuity and perseverance told with clarity and depth. The next chapter is ours to write."

— David W. Orr, professor of environmental studies and politics at Oberlin College and author of *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse*

"*Let It Shine* makes it abundantly clear that solar energy has a long and glorious past — a prologue, in fact — that is as bright and diverse as its future will be. Far from being a disruption of the current energy economy, solar power can be harnessed in thousands of ways, making it easy to embrace and integrate into our future, as this book brilliantly demonstrates."

— Daniel M. Kammen, distinguished professor of energy at the University of California, Berkeley

"*Let It Shine* shows how today's renewable revolution builds on the tenacious efforts of countless generations of innovators whose vision we may finally be privileged enough to bring to full flower."

— from the foreword by Amory B. Lovins, cofounder and chief scientist of the Rocky Mountain Institute

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**JOHN PERLIN**

**LET IT SHINE**  
THE 6,000-YEAR STORY OF SOLAR ENERGY



"*Let It Shine* is the solar bible.  
Thank you, John Perlin!"

— Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute

# LET IT SHINE

## THE 6,000-YEAR STORY OF SOLAR ENERGY

FULLY REVISED AND EXPANDED

**JOHN PERLIN**

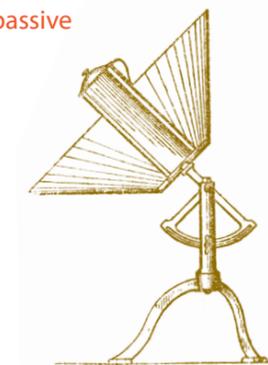
Foreword by Amory B. Lovins, cofounder and chief scientist of the Rocky Mountain Institute

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Environment / History / Architecture

Even as concern over climate change and energy security fuel a boom in solar technology, many still think of solar as a twentieth-century wonder. Few realize that the first photovoltaic array appeared on a New York City rooftop in 1884, or that brilliant engineers in France were using solar power in the 1860s to run steam engines, or that in 1901 an ostrich farmer in Southern California used a single solar engine to irrigate three hundred acres of citrus trees. Fewer still know that during the Renaissance Galileo and his contemporaries planned the construction of sun-focusing mirrors as the ultimate weapon to burn enemy fleets and towns, that Leonardo da Vinci planned to make his fortune by building half-mile-long mirrors to heat water, or that the Bronze Age Chinese used hand-sized solar-concentrating mirrors to light fires the way we use matches and lighters today.

In this definitive history of solar technology, John Perlin tells a story that goes back more than six thousand years to when the Stone Age Chinese built their homes to make maximum use of the sun's energy in winter. The book profiles the fascinating characters who made the solar revolution possible, revealing a group of unknown pioneers, like Gustav Vorherr, who opened up the first school of solar architecture in the 1820s, as well as solar advocates known for other accomplishments, such as Socrates, who 2,500 years ago gave a detailed discourse on designing passive solar homes.



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