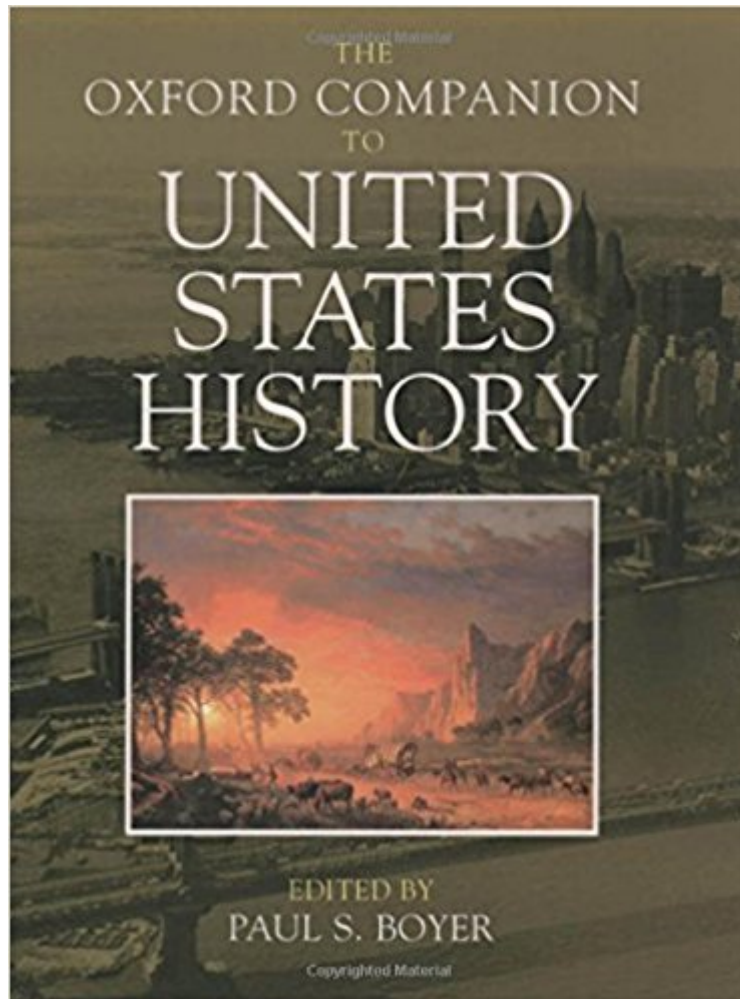


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The Oxford Companion To United States History (Oxford Companions)



Synopsis

Here is a volume that is as big and as varied as the nation it portrays. With over 1,400 entries written by some 900 historians and other scholars, it illuminates not only America's political, diplomatic, and military history, but also social, cultural, and intellectual trends; science, technology, and medicine; the arts; and religion. Here are the familiar political heroes, from George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, to Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. But here, too, are scientists, writers, radicals, sports figures, and religious leaders, with incisive portraits of such varied individuals as Thomas Edison and Eli Whitney, Babe Ruth and Muhammed Ali, Black Elk and Crazy Horse, Margaret Fuller, Emma Goldman, and Marian Anderson, even Al Capone and Jesse James. The Companion illuminates events that have shaped the nation (the Great Awakening, Bunker Hill, Wounded Knee, the Vietnam War); major Supreme Court decisions (Marbury v. Madison, Roe v. Wade); landmark legislation (the Fugitive Slave Law, the Pure Food and Drug Act); social movements (Suffrage, Civil Rights); influential books (The Jungle, Uncle Tom's Cabin); ideologies (conservatism, liberalism, Social Darwinism); even natural disasters and iconic sites (the Chicago Fire, the Johnstown Flood, Niagara Falls, the Lincoln Memorial). Here too is the nation's social and cultural history, from Films, Football, and the 4-H Club, to Immigration, Courtship and Dating, Marriage and Divorce, and Death and Dying. Extensive multi-part entries cover such key topics as the Civil War, Indian History and Culture, Slavery, and the Federal Government. A new volume for a new century, The Oxford Companion to United States History covers everything from Jamestown and the Puritans to the Human Genome Project and the Internet--from Columbus to Clinton. Written in clear, graceful prose for researchers, browsers, and general readers alike, this is the volume that addresses the totality of the American experience, its triumphs and heroes as well as its tragedies and darker moments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Students and history buffs need a good, comprehensive volume on the significant people, events, movements and changes in the United States over the course of its history. This volume, from the leading publisher of reference books in the English language, fails and disappoints with regard to these goals. This Oxford Companion tries to be the United States History of Everything, as a result it misses key aspects of political history and what it does cover is often inadequate and incomplete. The Companion tries to cover too many aspects of cultural history and its icons. As a result it sacrifices information on many important political and public figures. We get biographies of Michael Jordan and Marilyn Monroe but no separate bios of George Mason, William Borah, Hiram Johnson, Henry Cabot Lodge, Tom Watson, Joseph Cannon, Thomas Dewey, Nelson Rockefeller, Clarence Darrow, Sam Rayburn, Jesse Jackson -- and the list goes on and on. When they are covered it is often in snippets in subject area articles, which does not give a complete overview of their public careers. What it does cover in cultural and intellectual history is often incomplete. The Companion has separate articles on the history of the blues, jazz and a weak article on rural country and folk music, but absolutely nothing on bluegrass or commercial country music and its pioneers. The index doesn't even mention the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Bill Monroe or Hank Williams. Yet country music far exceeds both the blues and jazz in popularity in terms of its fan base and are certainly deserving popular art forms for inclusion. The selection of significant figures for separate biographies is often strange and arbitrary.

This "companion" has turned out to be less usable than I had hoped. Perhaps I can blame only myself; I wanted a "dictionary", or even an "encyclopedia", not a companion, though there is a similar and similarly-titled volume for British History from Oxford; that book is generally satisfactory. To be sure, there's quite a lot of information in this fat single-volume work on the USA as well, but it can be difficult to find it, and some of it just isn't there. The articles tend to be long involved essays. I'm in no position to argue their validity, as scholarship, but I want short, to the point articles. I tend to use a book like this for reference when reading popular writing by established scholars, and I'll

leave the ruminations to my current author; it's not the place of a single-volume handbook. Rather like the New York Times exceeding its bounds with its long "in-depth" articles when I just want the facts of the matter, in so far as they can be ascertained and presented. This has nothing to do with ideology; a newspaper is something different from a specialist magazine, or even a news magazine. The same goes for a handbook of history. Remedy might be sought in the Index. Alas, the Index enumerates mentions, but offers no guidance as to where the bulk of the info may be found, unless there's actually a headworded article for the matter. Sometimes there **isn't** anything substantial. Garraty and Foner's Readers Guide to US History frequently offered convenient articles that told me what I wanted to know.

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