

NATION OF NATIONS

A Narrative History of the American Republic

VOLUME ONE: TO 1877 THIRD EDITION



James West Davidson • Mark H. Lytle
Christine Leigh Heyrman • William E. Gienapp • Michael B. Stoff

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A NARRATIVE
HISTORY
OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

VOLUME I: TO 1877

THIRD EDITION

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A Narrative History of the American Republic

Volume I: To 1877

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NATION OF NATIONS

VOLUME I: TO 1877

Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations.

—WALT WHITMAN

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JAMES WEST DAVIDSON received his Ph.D. from Yale University. A historian who has pursued a full-time writing career, he is the author of numerous books, among them *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (with Mark H. Lytle), *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England*, and *Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure* (with John Rugge).

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The third edition of *Nation of Nations* holds firm to its original premise: that students will be drawn more readily to the study of history if they are presented with an engaging narrative of past events rather than with a mere encyclopedic compendium. Inevitably the creation of such a narrative has entailed difficult choices. The undergrowth of facts, dates, and qualifying clauses must be pruned and shaped so that what remains appears in bolder relief. Fortunately the job was made easier because the authors recently prepared a concise version of *Nation of Nations*. That task suggested to us ways we could profitably sharpen the full edition without losing either our narrative thread or the more detailed context provided by a full-length survey. Consequently, this edition is shorter than the second and, we believe, all the better for it.

Paradoxically, several changes have been inspired by the very success of our narrative approach. Some professors have written suggesting that just because the tale flows so smoothly, students may be seduced into thinking that the writing of history is without controversy—that the past must have occurred just as we have sketched it and that any questions of interpretation must be minor matters. To combat this misimpression every chapter now incorporates a discussion labelled “Counterpoint,” which explores contrasting ways historians have interpreted one of the chapter’s central topics. These discussions are deliberately not separated out as boxed features; instead, they are integrated into the narrative so that students come to understand such debates as an inevitable (and productive) part of writing history. In addition, we have added six longer essays focusing on the process of doing history. Entitled “After the Fact: Historians Reconstruct the Past,” the essays introduce students to the methods used by historians to analyze a variety of sources, ranging from typescript drafts of presidential memoirs or handwritten notations in church records to military casualty estimates, public monuments, and even climate data derived from the analysis of tree rings.

Other changes in the new edition reflect history’s inevitable expansion, both chronologically and thematically. Late nineteenth-century topics originally covered in Chapters 21 and 22 (“The Failure of Traditional Politics” and “The New Empire”) have been incorporated into a single chapter, “The Political System Under Strain.” The text’s final chapter, “A Nation Still Divisible,” brings the narrative up through the Republican resurgence of 1994 and the reelection of President Clinton. Many other changes both large and small have been made throughout. Coverage of environmental history has been expanded, and there is an increased emphasis on the new western history, particularly in Chapter 20. New maps and charts have been added, including some never before seen in a survey text. Finally, in addition to the full bibliographies appearing at the back of the book, each chapter has an expanded annotated bibliography, called “Additional Reading,” as well as specific bibliographical references within the “After the Fact” features.

Despite these changes, the text's basic structure remains. Each of the book's six parts begins with an essay setting American events in a global context. We believe it is important to show that the United States did not develop in a geographic or cultural vacuum and that the broad forces shaping it also influenced other nations. Each global essay features a timeline comparing political and social events in the United States with developments elsewhere. Marginal headings throughout the entire text help students focus on key terms and concepts, while each chapter concludes with a succinct summary and a timeline of significant events. Complementing the core narrative are our "Daily Lives" essays, focusing on one of five themes that give insight into the lives of ordinary Americans: clothing and fashion; time and travel; food, drink, and drugs; public space/private space; and popular entertainment.

We are grateful to the many reviewers who were generous enough to offer comments and suggestions at various stages in our development of this manuscript. Our thanks go to Thomas Altherr, Metropolitan State College of Denver; Carol Berkin, Baruch College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; Winifred E. A. Bernhard, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Roger W. Biles, Oklahoma State University; Carol Brown, Houston Community College; Victor Chen, Chabot College; Vincent A. Clark, Johnson County Community College; Mario S. DePillis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Leonard Dinnerstein, University of Arizona; Mark Dollinger, Pasadena City College; Alan Downs, Georgia Southern University; Lynn Dumenil, Claremont McKenna College; Robert Elam, Modesto Junior College; Robert G. Fricke, West Valley College; Richard Frucht, Northwest Missouri State University; John Gauger, Lehigh Carbon Community College; James L. Gormly, Washington and Jefferson College; Robert Greenblatt, Mass Bay Community College; Peter Iverson, Arizona State University; Priscilla Jackson-Evans, Longview Community College; George Juergens, Indiana University; Burton I. Kaufman, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; John L. Larson, Purdue University; Mark H. Leff, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; John Little, St. Augustine's College; Norman Love, El Paso Community College; John McCardell, Middlebury College; C. K. McFarland, Arkansas State University; Gerald W. McFarland, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; William E. Mahan, Sacramento City College; John Mauer, Tri County Technical College; Sonya Michel, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; William Howard Moore, University of Wyoming; Christopher Morris, University of Texas, Austin; Betty Owens, Greenville Technical College; Robert Pierce, Foothill College; Charles Pilant, Cumberland College; Leo P. Ribuffo, George Washington University; Randolph Roth, Ohio State University; Dennis C. Rousey, Arkansas State University; Tom Ryan, Broward Community College; Susan Rugh, St. Cloud State University; James C. Schneider, University of Texas, San Antonio; Ronald Schultz, University of Wyoming; Rebecca Shoemaker, Indiana State University; Lewright B. Sikes, Middle Tennessee State University; Nina Silber, Boston University; Gregory Holmes Singleton, Northeastern Illinois University; David Sloan, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; Daniel B. Smith, University of Kentucky; Donna J. Spindel, Marshall University; Thomas E. Terrill, University of South Carolina; Emory M. Thomas, University of Georgia; Richard H. Thompson, Indiana University—Purdue University, Indianapolis; Stephen G. Weisner, Springfield Technical Community College; Frank J. Wetta, Galveston College; William Bruce Wheeler, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Gerald Wilson, Duke University; Phillip B. Winkler, Dyersburg State College; and

William Young, Johnson County Community College. In addition, many friends and colleagues contributed their advice and constructive criticism in ways both small and large. These included Michael Bellesiles, Lawrence A. Cardoso, Dinah Chenven, James E. Crisp, R. David Edmunds, George Forgie, Erica Gienapp, Drew McCoy, James McPherson, Stephen E. Maizlish, Jim Sidbury, Harold Silesky, David J. Weber, and Virginia Joyner.

The division of labor for this book was determined by our respective fields of scholarship: Christine Heyrman, the colonial era, in which Europeans, Africans, and Indians participated in the making of both a new America and a new republic; William Gienapp, the 90 years in which the young nation first flourished, then foundered on the issues of section and slavery; Michael Stoff, the post-Civil War era, in which industrialization and urbanization brought the nation more centrally into an international system constantly disrupted by depression and war; and Mark Lytle, the modern era, in which Americans finally faced the reality that even the boldest dreams of national greatness are bounded by the finite nature of power and resources both natural and human. Finally, because the need to specialize inevitably imposes limits on any project as broad as this one, our fifth author, James Davidson, served as a general editor and writer, with the intent of fitting individual parts to the whole, as well as providing a measure of continuity, style, and overarching purpose. In producing this collaborative effort, all of us have shared the conviction that the best history speaks to a larger audience.

JAMES WEST DAVIDSON
 WILLIAM E. GIENAPP
 CHRISTINE LEIGH HEYRMAN
 MARK H. LYTLE
 MICHAEL B. STOFF

INTRODUCTION

History is both a discipline of rigor, bound by rules and scholarly methods, and something more: the unique, compelling, even strange way in which we humans define ourselves. We are all the sum of the tales of thousands of people, great and small, whose actions have etched their lines on us. History supplies our very identity—a sense of the social groups to which we belong, whether family, ethnic group, race, class, or gender. It reveals to us the foundations of our deepest religious beliefs and traces the roots of our economic and political systems. It explores how we celebrate and grieve, sing the songs we sing, weather the illnesses to which time and chance subject us. It commands our attention for all these good reasons and for no good reason at all, other than a fascination with the way the myriad tales play out. Strange that we should come to care about a host of men and women so many centuries gone, some with names eminent and familiar, others unknown but for a chance scrap of information left behind in an obscure letter.

Yet we do care. We care about Sir Humphrey Gilbert, “devoured and swallowed up of the Sea” one black Atlantic night in 1583; about George Washington at Kips Bay, red with fury as he takes a riding crop to his retreating soldiers. We care about Octave Johnson, a slave fleeing through Louisiana swamps trying to decide whether to stand and fight the approaching hounds or take his chances with the bayou alligators; about Clara Barton, her nurse’s skirts so heavy with blood from the wounded she must wring them out before tending to the next soldier. We are drawn to the fate of Chinese laborers, chipping away at the Sierras’ looming granite; a Georgian named Tom Watson seeking to forge a colorblind political alliance; and desperate immigrant mothers, kerosene in hand, storming Brooklyn butcher shops that had again raised prices. We follow, with a mix of awe and amusement, the fortunes of the quirky Henry Ford (“Everybody wants to be somewhere he ain’t”), turning out identical automobiles, insisting his factory workers wear identical expressions (“Fordization of the Face”). We trace the career of young Thurgood Marshall, crisscrossing the South in his own “little old beat-up ‘29 Ford,” typing legal briefs in the back seat, trying to get black teachers to sue for equal pay, hoping to get his people somewhere they weren’t. The list could go on and on, spilling out as it did in Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*: “A southerner soon as a northerner, a planter nonchalant and hospitable,/A Yankee bound my own way . . . a Hoosier, a Badger, a Buckeye, a Louisianian or Georgian. . . .” Whitman embraced and celebrated them all, inseparable strands of what made him an American and what made him human:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barleycorn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

To encompass so expansive an America Whitman turned to poetry; historians have traditionally chosen *narrative* as their means of giving life to the past. That



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|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. NETHERLANDS | 18. MOLDOVA |
| 2. BELGIUM | 19. GEORGIA |
| 3. LUXEMBOURG | 20. ARMENIA |
| 4. ESTONIA | 21. AZERBAIJAN |
| 5. LATVIA | 22. LEBANON |
| 6. LITHUANIA | 23. ISRAEL |
| 7. CZECH REPUBLIC | 24. LAOS |
| 8. SLOVAKIA | 25. THAILAND |
| 9. SWITZERLAND | 26. CAMBODIA |
| 10. AUSTRIA | 27. PUERTO RICO (U.S.) |
| 11. HUNGARY | 28. ST. KITTS AND NEVIS |
| 12. SLOVENIA | 29. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA |
| 13. CROATIA | 30. DOMINICA |
| 14. BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA | 31. ST. LUCIA |
| 15. YUGOSLAVIA | 32. ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES |
| 16. MACEDONIA | 33. BARBADOS |
| 17. ALBANIA | 34. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO |





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