THE UNITED STATES

Conquering a Continent

Volume I

Winthrop D. Jordan

Leon F. Litwack

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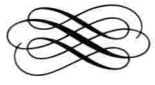

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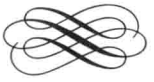

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A NOTE OF INTRODUCTION

A word about history. The word *history* has a double meaning. It refers to what did in fact take place in the past. It also refers to our study and understanding of those events and how we talk and write about them.

These two meanings are often confused. We all have met such expressions as "history tells us . . . ," "history shows . . . ," and "the lessons of history are. . . ." These expressions assume that the actual events of the past can themselves teach us about the present and perhaps even the future. However, past events cannot themselves speak, let alone teach. But we can and do learn from what has been said and written about them. We learn from what other people today are saying about what went on in the past, as well as from what people in *our* past said about *their* past.

Here things get tricky, simply because historians are people. No two historians look at past events in exactly the same manner. They draw differing conclusions about the meaning of what went on and sometimes about what actually did go on. They also disagree about what was important enough to bother discussing. For example, historians still disagree as to exactly when President Woodrow Wilson suffered his first stroke. At a different level of inquiry, they disagree about the causes and consequences of the American Civil War and the Cold War. Today, much more than they used to, historians are learning and writing about the lives of ordinary men and women. Whether Joe and Josephine Smith went to the supermarket on October 4, 1958, is in itself obviously not of great importance, but the fact that millions of Americans were getting their food in such a manner obviously is, especially since we know that the Smiths' parents could not have fed themselves or their families in that manner.

Why bother with the past in any form? The most basic answer is that we cannot do without it. As individuals, we use it all the time. Each of us lives in the present, but our immediate experiences, thoughts, and perceptions are shaped by our previous ones. We are what we have been—and what we think we have been. An important part of our present is our awareness of our past. Similarly, an entire society is shaped by its past and by its consciousness of that past. As individuals and as a nation, we cannot tell where we are (much less where we are going) without knowing where we have been. And because the United States is a vast and profoundly complex entity, including over the years more than half a billion individual lives and millions of groups, the task of understanding this nation is not an easy one. But it can be very rewarding and even fun.

This book has a number of thematic chapters, such as those dealing with important intellectual and literary developments. Nonetheless we have adhered to a fundamentally chronological structure, an approach that is dictated by the unfolding of events. We are convinced that anyone who thinks that the U.S. Constitution was adopted before the American Revolution is not going to be able to understand either of those two major developments. The same may be said of the Vietnam War and World War II, or of the invention of the atomic bomb and the creation of the steam engine.

A few words about this substantially revised edition of *The United States.* We have tried to convey both the personalities and importance of such public leaders as George Whitefield, John

Calhoun, and Dorothea Dix; of Franklin Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ronald Reagan. We have also emphasized the history of less powerful people. The ordinary folk who have made up the great bulk of American society expressed themselves in various ways in the past, as they still do today. We have stressed their experiences and their voices—the lives of Indians, blacks, Hispanic Americans, and dozens of immigrant groups from Europe and Asia, as well as working people in the fields, boats, shops, factories, mines, and homes of the nation.

This edition has much more about women because a solid body of scholarship in women's history has emerged in very recent years. We have dealt with women in such various roles as young daughters and child laborers, mothers and grandmothers, factory and office workers, farmers and westward pioneers, reformers, intellectuals, professionals, and politicians. As we have with ethnic, racial, and religious groups, we have dealt with the record of women's achievements and with the record of the obstacles and defeats that barred their way.

This edition also includes a unique feature—a series of boxes entitled "Words and Names in American History." These are miniature essays about the specifically American background of words that are in common use today, or were until quite recently. Some are political, such as *lobby*, *logrolling*, *gerrymander*, and *platform;* others are geographical, such as *Mississippi*, *Wall Street*, and the *Mason-Dixon line;* still others defy classification, such as *Uncle Sam*, *cafeteria*, *deadline*, *lynch*, and *hazing*. All of them cast small shafts of light on the American past.

Finally, we have tried to set American history into the context of global history, to convey American developments as they related to the ongoing development of the rapidly modernizing society in which the inhabitants of the world are participants, whether they wish to be or not.

This book derives from one first published in 1957 by Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron. Since then it has been successively revised, after 1976 by the present two authors. As with the previous edition, the text of the chapters through the Civil War is by Winthrop Jordan; those from Reconstruction and Restoration to the present, by Leon Litwack.

Both of us hope that readers of this book will gain more than a formal knowledge of American history. We hope they will also gain an appreciation of the richness and diversity of American cultural expression, and a deeper, more subtle sense of what it means to live in this somewhat ambiguous, ever-changing nation.

A number of teaching and learning aids are available with the text. These include a **Two-Volume Study Guide,** prepared by Elizabeth Neumeyer of Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, Michigan. An **Instructor's Manual,** authored by Robert Tomes of St. John's University, Staten Island, New York and a **Test Item File** by Paul Harvey of the University of California at Berkeley provide, respectively, teaching suggestions, chapter outlines, and film lists, and over one thousand objective-test and essay questions. The material in the **Test Item File** is also available on CD.

Many instructors read the manuscript of the text and offered helpful suggestions for improvement. They include William C. Hine, South Carolina State College; Roger L. Nichols, University of Arizona; George H. Skau, Bergen Community College; Alwyn Barr, Texas Tech University; Robert Haws, University of Mississippi; Robert D. Cross, University of Virginia; Leonard L. Richards, University of Massachusetts; Peyton McCrary, University of South Alabama; Richard Wightman Fox, Yale University; Robert G. Pope, State University of New York at Buffalo; Joseph C. Morton, Northeastern Illinois University; Thomas A. Drueger, University of Illinois at Urbana; John Mayfield, University of Kentucky; Linda Dudik Guerrero, Palomar College; Bradley R. Rice, Clayton Junior College; David C. Hammack, Princeton University; Alasdair Macphail, Connecticut College; Harvey H. Jackson, Clayton Junior College; Jerry Rodnitzky, University of Texas at Arlington; Michael L. Lanza, University of New Orleans; Clarence F. Walker, University of California at Davis; and Ray White, Ball State University. We would especially like to thank our editors at Northwest Publishing, as well as the many others whose hard work is reflected in this new edition.

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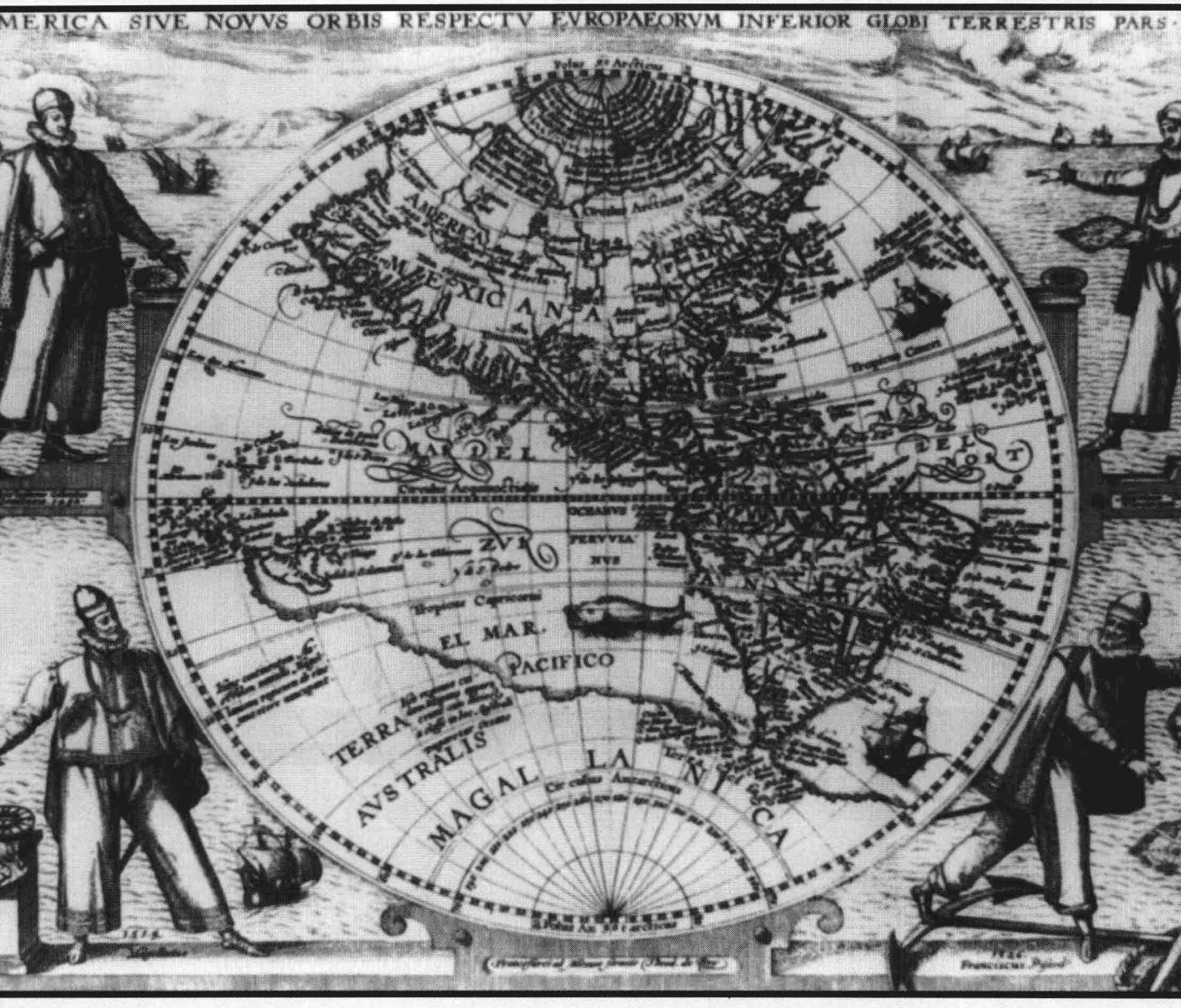
Leon F. Litwack



Replica map of the Americas with portraits of Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Ferdinand Magellan, and Francisco Pizarro around border. *(Library of Congress)*

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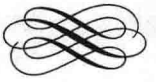
MIGRANTS TO THE NEW WORLD



The first people who migrated to this part of the world came from Asia. They made this adventurous journey, probably hunting large animals, somewhere between ten and forty thousand years ago. They came on foot in small groups at several different periods when lower sea levels exposed an ancient land bridge between Asia and Alaska at what is now the Bering Strait. As thousands of years went by, they fanned out over North, Central, and South America. This scattering resulted in the development of hundreds of different languages and a wide variety of physical characteristics, social organization, and levels of technology. For thousands of years these various peoples remained isolated from one another because the land was so vast, and from their Asian homeland because melting ice caps drowned the ancient land bridge under three hundred feet of water.

Much later, only five hundred years ago, came a remarkably sudden burst of immigration by sea from western Europe and western Africa. This was the beginning of the explosion of western European culture that has so profoundly shaped the entire world today. At first that immigration to the Americas was largely Spanish, but then other Atlantic-European nations began to take an interest in what Europeans called the New World. People from Portugal, France, the Netherlands, the British Isles, and even Germany migrated across the Atlantic Ocean. These western Europeans forced people from many nations in West Africa to migrate as slaves, especially to tropical regions of the Western Hemisphere.

From about 1500, therefore, the history of the American continents and islands was no longer isolated from developments in the Old World. And of course developments in the New World were beginning to change what went on in the Old.

At that time western Europe was developing a new, dynamic economic system: commercial capitalism. The Atlantic nations of western Europe were becoming more centralized than before, usually under newly powerful monarchs. They developed strong international rivalries that greatly affected events in the Americas, Europe, and even Africa and Asia. At the same time, the great Western Christian church was split by the Reformation; for several centuries the deep-seated hostility between Roman Catholics and Protestants caused friction and sometimes war among nations.

The Europeans who migrated to the New World had a profound and usually disastrous