The Social Fabric

American Life from 1607 to 1877

Editors

John H. Cary / Julius Weinberg

FOURTH EDITION

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The Social Fabric

Dedicated with love to

Kathryn Ditter Cary

and to Sean, Paul, Kenneth, and Carolyn

Preface

> I know histhry isn't thrue Hinnessy, because it ain't like what I see ivry day in Halsted Sthreet. If any wan comes along with a histhry iv Greece or Rome that'll show me th' people fightin', gettin' dhrunk, makin' love, gettin' married, owin' the grocery man an' bein' without hard-coal, I'll believe they was a Greece or Rome, but not befure.

The sentiment of Mr. Dooley, Finley Peter Dunne's comic Irish philosopher, expresses the attitude of many people toward history. Young Americans, especially, question the relevance of a history that deals only with politics, diplomacy, governments, and famous leaders, and ignores the daily life of average men and women. Two recent trends, however, are doing much to remedy this neglect. One is increased popular interest in the forgotten mass of men and women who tilled our fields, built our cities, and fought our wars, but who achieved no particular fame and left very little record of their lives and thought. The second development is the renewed concern of historians with social history.

This kind of history has more meaning for us, and touches our lives more directly, than any other aspect of our past. In an age seeking "relevance" nothing is more relevant than American social history. Each of us has direct experience, or an intimate awareness, of being part of a family, of falling in love and marrying, of poverty and pain, of suffering in war, of earning a living, of social oppression and reform. By understanding the social life of an earlier age, we can gain an understanding of ourselves and of others, in whatever time or place they lived.

This is an anthology of American social history for college history courses. It began with our belief that college students would find more meaning in the kind of history described by Mr. Dooley than in political, diplomatic, or constitutional history. This and the companion volume of *The Social Fabric,*

which covers the period from 1865 to the present, touch upon marrying and making love, fighting and getting drunk, owing the grocer, and going without heat. Covering the time from the earliest settlement of America to Reconstruction, it contains descriptions of what it was like to cross the ocean in an immigrant ship and the Great Plains in a covered wagon, what marriage and the family were like in the seventeenth century and what sex was like in the nineteenth, what life was like for women workers in New England factories and for slaves on southern plantations, and how people behaved in a frontier revival meeting or in an austere Shaker community.

No single book can treat every aspect of our history, but these volumes examine American life in much of its diversity. There are essays on women as well as men, on Indians and blacks as well as whites, and on the poor and the oppressed as well as the rich and the powerful. The sectional, class, racial, and religious differences among our heterogeneous people have created serious strains that at times threatened to tear the nation apart. But with all their diversity, the American people have also shared many common attitudes and traditions that provided a common social fabric to bind them together.

We have selected the readings from some of the most interesting writing on the American past. We have prefaced each reading with an introductory note, explaining the relation of the subject to broader developments in American history of the period. Each selection is also accompanied by an illustration, which provides a visual commentary on the topic under consideration. The study guide that follows the selection will help you review the special aspects of the reading, and may suggest issues for class discussion. The bibliographical note will help you find further material, should you wish to read more on the topic.

The Fourth Edition

This new edition of *The Social Fabric* features very extensive changes in volume I, with nine new articles included. We have been assisted by the questionnaires, printed at the end of each volume, which many student readers have sent to the publisher, as well as the suggestions and criticisms of teachers who have used the book. One suggestion, from teachers who divide the American history course at 1877 rather than 1865, was to include the first selection of volume II, by Joel Williamson, as the last selection in volume I. We have done this, without dropping any of the twenty other topics treated.

Some readers felt that the selection on marriage in colonial Virginia was charming and informative; others suggested that we substitute a more recent work. In this edition, we have included a new selection by Lyle Koehler on women and children in seventeenth-century New England. We have omitted the essay on the New England town, and have strengthened the readings on the American Revolution by introducing a selection from Charles Royster's

highly regarded study to complement Wallace Brown's popular essay on the Loyalists. There is also a new selection by Everett Dick on the Second Great Awakening that is a somewhat broader treatment of religion on the frontier than was presented in the third edition.

The section on the Age of Jackson has been retitled "The Age of Reform," and an article on the temperance crusade by Mark Lender and James Martin has been added. In place of an article on crime and law enforcement in the nineteenth century, we have introduced a selection from Michael Feldberg's book on crowds and riots in Jacksonian America. The graphic article on the Donner Party, which many students liked, has been replaced by a selection from John D. Unruh's recent revisionist study of the western migration that is more representative of the experiences of most migrants. A number of teachers felt that the antislavery crusade should be covered in this volume; we have included a selection from Robert Abzug's recent biography of Theodore Dwight Weld. The selection that concluded the third edition of volume I was a description of the life of Johnny Reb and Billy Yank during the American Civil War. Fond as we were of this selection, we agreed with those readers who suggested that it romanticized that great national conflict, and we have substituted a very different article by one of the most distinguished American historians, Allan Nevins.

The response of students and teachers in both four-year colleges and community colleges to this anthology has been most gratifying. A number of teachers who used the earlier editions of *The Social Fabric* in introductory courses have indicated that these volumes rank with the most successful supplementary materials they have ever used. We hope that the revisions in the fourth edition make them even more useful in American history courses.

J.C.
J.W.

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The Social Fabric

I COLONIAL AMERICANS

All Americans are descended from ancestors who came to the western hemisphere from other parts of the world in what was to be the largest migration of people in recorded history. For some 15,000 years, the land we know as the United States was inhabited by Indian peoples who had crossed from northern Asia to Alaska and made their way across both American continents. When Jamestown, Virginia was founded in 1607, the Indian population of North America may have numbered 500,000 to 1,500,000 people, thinly scattered in tribes from the warlike Iroquois hunters of the Northeast to the pueblo dwellers of the Southwest.

During the next two centuries, one tribe after another encountered invaders from England and other European countries who brought very different social values, technological developments, agricultural traditions, governmental institutions, and diseases with them. The Europeans also brought hundreds of thousands of African slaves to the New World, and the encounter of these three peoples makes up much of the sometimes tragic and occasionally brutal history of early America. People of English descent comprised half of the population of newcomers by the end of the eighteenth century, and the colonies had been under the English government. Thus, English influences were naturally predominant in shaping colonial institutions and social life. However, Africans and continental Europeans comprised the other half of the population, and their language, religion, and social attitudes modified English institutions and contributed significantly to the rich variety of American society.

The first article in this section depicts the life and culture of the Seneca Indians in the eighteenth century, by which time all of the eastern Indian tribes had suffered serious consequences from the European invasion of their lands. The selection describes the power of women in Seneca society, the way in which parents raised their children, and their attitudes toward crime, war, and other social questions. The second reading treats the conditions of slavery in Virginia, the complex relationship that existed between master and slave, and the ways in which slaves rebelled at their enslavement. It would seem that Europeans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had some peculiar ideas about their own superiority and the inferiority of other peoples to be able to self-righteously dispossess the Indians from their homelands and to enslave millions of Africans. The third essay may provide some indirect evidence of this sort of thinking, for it concerns the New England male's assumption of his own superiority and the divine law of women's submissiveness. Of course, conflict in colonial America was not always between different ethnic or racial groups. The last reading describes the conflict within New England society that we know as the Salem witchcraft trials. In this affair, once again, some members of society were so confident of the rightness of their views that they accused hundreds of people of witchcraft and put twenty men and women to death to clear New England of the Devil.

Courtesy of The New York Historical Society,
New York City

Bertoli's 1796 portrait of Cornplanter (Ki-on-twog-ky) reflects European influence on the clothing and weapons of the Seneca.

1

ANTHONY F. C. WALLACE

Indian Life and Culture

In order to understand the history of the United States, we must look to two remote cultures — the European world in the fifteenth century, on the eve of the discovery of the Western Hemisphere, and the ancient Indian culture that existed on this side of the Atlantic. The red man has lived on this continent for about 20,000 years and has been in contact with Europeans and Africans for nearly five hundred years. Yet most Americans know little about Indian life and culture. The movie image of a treacherous savage and the trinket purchased at a souvenir shop have left the real character of the Indian as invisible to the white majority as that of the black man has been for more than three hundred years.

Oliver La Farge has suggested that the Indian has always been unknown to more recently arrived fellow countrymen, because of a number of myths that whites found it convenient to believe. The earliest of these myths — picturing the Indian as a noble, uncorrupted child of nature — survived in distant Europe longer than it did in the British colonies. Here, as settlers pushed inland and came into conflict with the Indian over land, the more convenient myth of the brutal, treacherous savage supplanted it. Eventually, as industrialized America pushed the Indian tribes onto reservations, a third myth, that of a drunken, irresponsible dependent, became popular.

Anthropologists and historians have been devoting serious attention to the American Indian since Lewis Henry Morgan published a path-breaking study of the Iroquois in 1851. Yet, much of the writing has necessarily been based on a record left by whites, has dealt mostly with Indian-white relations, and leaves