

AMERICA



Tindall • Shi

BRIEF THIRD EDITION • VOLUME ONE

AMERICA

A N A R R A T I V E
H I S T O R Y

BRIEF THIRD EDITION



VOLUME I

GEORGE BROWN TINDALL

DAVID E. SHI



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PREFACE

The warm reception instructors have accorded the Brief Second edition of *America: A Narrative History* suggests that the book's purpose remains valid: to offer a succinct introductory narrative history of America—a narrative alive with character, augmented with analysis and social texture, and propelled by the energy of great events. The format continues to be unique in its field: *America* is designed to be read. Its single-column page remains uncluttered by distracting inserts, portfolios, or other interruptions to the story. It also remains the only text that students can purchase without breaking the bank and carry around without breaking the back.

Why a brief edition? We hope it meets the needs of those instructors who must cover the American past from its pre-Columbian roots to the present in one semester or less. It is also intended for those professors who prefer to assign students a brief text and rely more heavily on supplementary readings.

Smaller by one-third than the full Third Edition, the Brief *America* retains the character and appearance of its parent volume. The narrative is still strewn with colorful personalities and illuminating anecdotes, but its detail has been pared back throughout. Almost all the major subjects discussed in the full edition remain here, but most have been reduced in length and several sections have been reorganized.

The most salient theme of this new edition is embodied in a question posed over two hundred years ago by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, a transplanted French farmer: "What then is the American, this new man?" Crèvecoeur, who arrived in the colonies in 1759, married an American woman, and settled on a New York farm, went on to explain in *Letters from an American Farmer* that in America "individuals of all nations are melted into a new

race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." Fifty years later the transcendental philosopher-poet Ralph Waldo Emerson addressed the same point when he wrote in his journal that in America, this "asylum of all nations, the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles and Cosacks, and all the European tribes—of the Africans and of the Polynesians, will construct a new race . . . as vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting pot of the Dark Ages."

These statements express a shared truth: from its inception America has been an ambitious effort to create a pluralist society. The United States has welcomed more people from other places than any other country in history, and the process of absorbing such a multicultural population has given American life its roiling energy. The lofty social aim of American civilization is expressed in the official motto of the United States, *e pluribus unum*—"one out of many."

Yet the national motto has rarely described the reality. Americans have prided themselves on their ability to fashion what one New York mayor called a "gorgeous mosaic," an integration of different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. But in fact the United States has never become the mythic "melting pot" envisioned by Crèvecoeur, Emerson, and others. Instead, peoples from the four corners of the globe have converged to form a richly diverse—and often fractious, too often violent—society held tenuously together by a shared commitment to democratic principles, economic opportunity, religious freedom, and the rule of law.

From the Revolutionary era to the 1990s, the nation's politicians, preachers, and pundits have debated the effects of America's quest for unity through diversity. This quest forms a prominent thread running through the pages of this edition. It surfaces in discussions of the backgrounds and folkways of the colonists, in accounts of the waves of "new" immigration in the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries and the nativist prejudices they aroused, in descriptions of the tangled skein of legislation affecting immigrants and refugees, and in data detailing recent trends in immigration and ethnic diversity. Few students, we suspect, realize that immigrants were responsible for one-third of the population growth of the United States in the 1980s, or that fully 80 percent of the newcomers were from Asia and Latin America.

To describe the remarkable "peopling of America," this edition of *America* highlights biography. From Anne Hutchinson and John Winthrop through Sojourner Truth, Mary Elizabeth

Lease, Amelia Earhart and Martin Luther King, Jr., brief biographies integrated throughout the narrative give students a more textured feel for the character and personality of key figures. And in fresh treatments of female slaves, women workers at the Lowell mills, women on the frontier and on the social fronts of foreign wars, this Brief Third Edition of *America* offers enhanced discussions of women's lives and their contributions to American history.

By its very nature a brief survey can neither exhaust the facts of history nor treat every fashion of theory or interpretation, whether old or new. It instead offers a tour of the house of history, so to speak, pointing out many doors, stopping to open a few, stepping inside some of them, and all the while hoping that readers will be enticed to explore further what is behind those doors and others.

Our collaboration on the Brief Third Edition and its parent version benefited greatly from the insights and suggestions of many people. The following scholars provided close readings of the full manuscript at various stages: Albert Broussard (Texas A & M University), Janet Coryell (Auburn University), Charles Eagles (University of Mississippi), Peter R. Knights (York University), Phillip L. Osborne (United States Air Force Academy), David Parker (Southwest Missouri State University), Malcolm Rohrbough (University of Iowa), and Daniel B. Thorp (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). Copyeditors Debra Makay and Margie Brassil polished the manuscript. Kristin Prevail showed remarkable energy in gathering material for illustrations, and Bonnie Hall helped with innumerable details. Linda Sellars (University of North Carolina) updated the bibliographies originally prepared by Gary Freeze (Erskine College) and revised for the second edition by David Parker. Steve Forman, our steadfast editor at W. W. Norton, remains a pillar of insight and patience. An accomplished wordsmith with a certain historical flourish himself, he pruned our prose without bruising our pride and in the process gave enhanced meaning to the term discretion. We are confident that this edition of *America* is the better for the assistance provided by all of these people.

—George B. Tindall
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

—David E. Shi
Davidson, North Carolina

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1

DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT

The earliest Americans are lost in the mists of time, where legends abound. Some romancers have claimed that the continent's first human inhabitants came from the mythical lost continent of Atlantis; others believe that they drifted across from Asia, Africa, or Europe. The most plausible explanation is that nomadic people entered the New World from Siberia to Alaska, either by island-hopping across the Bering Strait or by traversing a fifty-mile land bridge (Beringia) exposed by receding waters during the Ice Ages. They arrived some 15,000–25,000 years ago, when people could still walk across. For thousands of years small bands of these Asian immigrants split off from one another and filtered southward from the desolate, frigid, and wind-swept Yukon, following migrating mammoths and giant bison toward warmer regions, eventually reaching the tip of South America and the Atlantic coast of North America.

PRE-COLUMBIAN INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS

Once the ice sheets melted and the sea rose again, these migrants were cut off from the rest of humanity, except for the short-lived Viking settlements on Greenland (A.D. 985) and Newfoundland (A.D. 1001). Archeological digs add yearly to the fragments of knowledge about pre-Columbian America. The richest finds have been made in the high altitudes of Mexico and Peru, where the Olmecs, Mayas, Aztecs, Incas, and others built great empires and a monumental architecture, supported by large-scale agriculture and a far-flung commerce.

THE MAYAS, AZTECS, AND INCAS By about 2000–1500 B.C. the nomadic Indian tradition began to give way in what is today Central

America to more permanent farming settlements. The more settled life in turn provided leisure for more complex cultures, for the cultivation of religion, crafts, art, science, civic administration—and organized warfare. A stratified social structure also developed. From about A.D. 300–900 this Middle American region reached its cultural peak, with great religious centers, gigantic pyramids, temple complexes, and ceremonial courts, all supported by the surrounding villages. The Mayas, living in present-day Yucatán, Guatemala, Belize, and western Honduras and El Salvador, were a warlike people who ruled a far-flung and loosely controlled empire. They built dozens of pyramids, devised a complex writing system based on hieroglyphs, and developed enough mathematics and astronomy to devise a calendar more accurate than that used by Columbus. Then, about A.D. 900, for reasons unknown, Mayan culture abruptly collapsed and the religious centers were abandoned.

The equally warlike Aztecs, who arrived from the northwest, founded the city of Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City) in 1325 and gradually extended their control over central Mexico. When the Spaniards invaded in 1519, the Aztec Empire under Montezuma II ruled over 5 million people who were held in fairly loose subjugation by a hereditary elite of warrior-priests. Their economy depended on agriculture, and their religious practices included human sacrifices to the sun god. (More than 5,000 people were supposedly sacrificed to celebrate the coronation of Montezuma II in 1502.) Farther south, Incas by the fifteenth century controlled an empire that stretched a thousand miles along the Andes mountains from Ecuador to Chile, connected by an elaborate system of roads and organized under an autocratic government which dominated community life as fully as any twentieth-century totalitarian state.

INDIAN CULTURES OF NORTH AMERICA Of the hundreds of Indian tribes inhabiting the present-day United States, the ancestors of only a few such as the Pueblos, Creeks, and Iroquois ever approached the level of social organization or cultural sophistication achieved by the Mayas or Aztecs. North American tribes tended to be smaller, more scattered, and less settled. Most of them migrated with the seasons in search of food—fish, deer, rabbits, maize (corn), nuts, berries—and temperate locales. They built few permanent structures and tended to own land communally, although individuals were allowed to own the food they produced or gathered.

In the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys many tribes did



A wooden carving of a mother carrying a child, found in a Hopewell burial mound in southern Ohio.

develop a thriving village culture which, while still primarily dependent on hunting and gathering for subsistence, also cultivated squash, beans, and maize. But even the most developed Indian societies of the sixteenth century were ill-equipped to resist the dynamic European cultures invading their world. There were large and fatal gaps in Indian knowledge and technology. The Indians of Mexico, for example, had copper and bronze but no iron, except a few specimens of meteorites. They had domesticated dogs, turkeys, and llamas, but horses were unknown until the Spaniards arrived. When fighting erupted, arrows and tomahawks were seldom a match for guns.

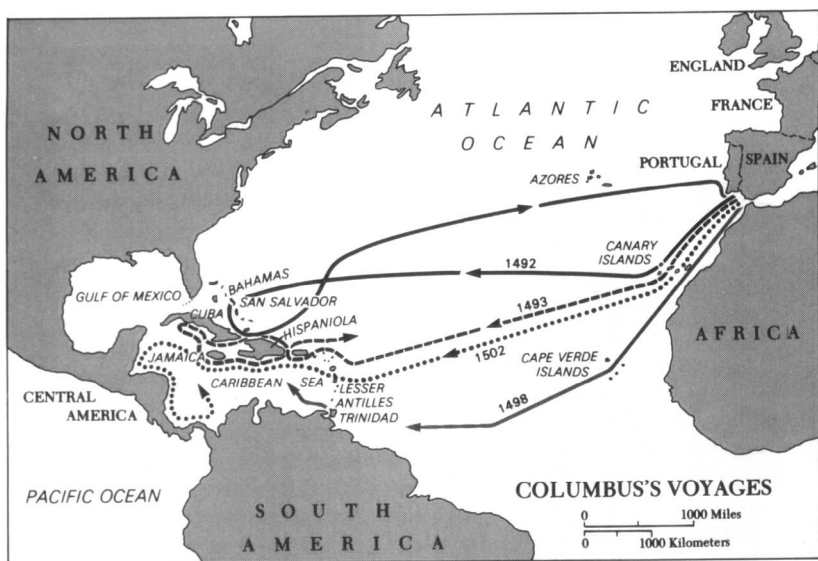
But despite such disadvantages, the Indians resisted European invaders for centuries. They displayed an amazing capacity for adapting to changing circumstances, incorporating European technology and weaponry, forging new alliances, changing their own community structures, and in a surprising number of instances converting whites to their way of life. Many Spanish, English, and French settlers voluntarily joined Indian society or chose to stay after being captured. As a French colonist in America noted, "thousands of Europeans are Indians," yet "we have no examples of even one of those Aborigines having from choice become Europeans."

THE COLLISION OF CULTURES

The discovery of the New World coincided with the opening of the modern period in European history. Indeed the burst of energy with which Europe spread its power and culture around the world provided the epoch-making force of modern times. The expansion of Europe derived from, and in turn affected, the peculiar patterns and institutions which distinguished modern times from the medieval: the revival of learning and the rise of the inquiring spirit; the explosive growth of trade, towns, and modern corporations; the decline of feudalism and the rise of national states; the religious zeal generated by the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation; and on the darker side, some old sins—greed, conquest, racism, and slavery. By the fifteenth century these forces had combined to focus European eyes on new lands to conquer or settle and new peoples to convert, civilize, or exploit. They were especially attracted by the lure of Asia, a near-mythical land of spices, silks, jewels, and millions of “heathens” to be Christianized. Marco Polo had returned from the Orient bedazzled by a region where “sands sparkled and glittered with gems and precious ores.” But equally valued were the spices—pepper, nutmeg, clove—so essential to the preserving of food, especially in southern Europe, where the warm and humid climate accelerated spoilage.

THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS The Orient’s mythic wealth caught the expansive vision of Christopher Columbus. Born in 1451, the son of an Italian weaver, Columbus took to the sea at an early age and made up for his lack of formal education by learning geography, navigation, and Latin. As a young man he went on voyages to England and Iceland, and during the 1480s he hatched a scheme to reach Asia by sailing west. Columbus turned to Spain for backing, and after years of disappointment, he finally won the support of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish monarchs. The legend that the queen had to hock the crown jewels is as outrageous as the fable that Columbus had to prove the earth was round.

Columbus, a tall, robust, red-haired, and long-faced man with a ruddy complexion, prominent oval eyes, and huge nose, chartered one ship, the *Santa María*, and the Spanish city of Palos supplied two smaller caravels, the *Pinta* and *Niña*. From Palos this little squadron, with eighty-seven men, set sail on August 2, 1492, and headed by dead-reckoning westward for what Co-



lumbus thought was Asia. The first leg of the journey went well, thanks to a strong trade wind. But then the breeze lagged, the days passed, and the crew began to grumble about their captain's far-fetched plan. By October 10 talk of mutiny reached Columbus. He tried to rally flagging morale by reminding the crew of the dazzling riches awaiting them. Yet skepticism remained rife, and he finally promised that the expedition would turn back if land were not sighted in three days.

Early on October 12, 1492, a lookout called out, "*Tierra! Tierra!* [Land! Land!]." It was an island in the Bahamas that Columbus named San Salvador (Blessed Savior). According to Columbus's own reckoning he was near the Indies, so he called the islanders "Indios,"—Indians. He described them as naked people, "very well made, of very handsome bodies and very good faces." The Indians paddled out in dugout logs, which they called *canoa*, and offered gifts of parrots and javelins to the strangers. Their warm generosity and docile temperament led Columbus to write in his journal that "they invite you to share anything that they possess, and show as much love as if their hearts went with it." Yet he added that "with 50 men they could all be subjugated and compelled to do anything one wishes."

But at the moment Columbus was not interested in enslaving "noble savages"; he was seeking the Orient and its fabled riches. He therefore continued to search through the Bahamian Cays

down to Cuba, a place name that suggested Cipangua (Japan), and then eastward to the island he named Española (or Hispaniola), where he first found significant amounts of gold jewelry. Columbus learned of, but did not encounter until his second voyage, the fierce Caribs of the Lesser Antilles. The Caribbean Sea was named after them, and, because of their alleged bad habits, the word "Cannibal" derived from a Spanish version of their name (Canibal).

On the night before Christmas, 1492, the *Santa María* ran aground off Hispaniola, and Columbus, still believing he had reached Asia, decided to return home. He left about forty men behind in camp and seized a dozen natives to present as gifts to Spain's royal couple. After Columbus finally reached Palos, the news of his discovery spread rapidly throughout Europe, and Ferdinand and Isabella instructed him to prepare for a second voyage. Columbus returned across the Atlantic in 1493 with seventeen ships and some 1,200 men, as well as instructions to "treat the Indians very well and affectionately without causing them any annoyance whatever."

Once back in the New World, Admiral Columbus discovered the camp in chaos. The unsupervised soldiers had run amok, raping native women, robbing Indian villages, and, as Columbus's son later added, "committing a thousand excesses for which they were mortally hated by the Indians." The Indians finally struck back and killed ten Spaniards. A furious Columbus immediately launched a wholesale attack on the Indian villages. The Spaniards, armed with crossbows, guns, and ferocious dogs, decimated the native defenders and loaded 500 of them onto ships bound for the slave market in Spain.

After two more voyages to the New World, Columbus finally returned to Spain in 1504, and two years later he died. To the end Columbus refused to believe that he had discovered anything other than outlying parts of the Orient. Ironically, the New World was named not for its discoverer but for one of the first to argue with conviction that it was indeed a New World rather than Asia. In 1501 Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant-turned-explorer, led a Portuguese expedition along South America's Atlantic coast. He reported that he had encountered lands making up what "we may rightly call a new world, because our ancestors had no knowledge of them, and it will be a matter wholly new to all those who hear about them." Vespucci's "new world" theories led European geographers to Latinize his first name and use it to label the new continent. "America" thus appeared for