H-Net Reviews
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**Paul S. Boyer, ed.** *The Oxford Companion to United States History.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. xliv + 940 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-508209-8.

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Thirty-five years ago, Oxford University Press published its *Companion to American History*, edited by Thomas Herbert Johnson, a book familiar to most subscribers of this list. It was a useful volume, basically an encyclopedia consisting of 4,710 entries, many of them quite short, all written by Johnson.

Despite the similar title, the new *Oxford Companion to United States History* is a very different book. With fewer than a third as many entries, it is not so much an encyclopedia as it is a book of essays. Few of the entries are less the 250-300 words, and many are considerably more substantial–the one on "immigration," for example, is around six thousand words. All are readable and interesting, making this the sort of reference work one can simply pick up and enjoy–and as this is a huge book, close to a million words, there's a lot of enjoying to do.

Most of the entries were written by the leading scholars on those topics. There's Ruth Crocker on Jane Addams; Joe Trotter on African Americans; Norman Rosenberg on the Alien and Sedition Acts; Samuel Walker on the American Civil Liberties Union; John Higham on American Historiography; Leonard Dinnerstein on Anti-Semitism; Crandall Shifflett on Appalachia; David Oshinsky on the Army-McCarthy Hearings; Theodore Wilson on the Atlantic Charter; William Graebner on Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*; Trudier Harris on James Baldwin; Kathryn Kish Sklar on Catharine Beecher; Benjamin Labaree on the Boston Tea Party; Stanley Engerman on Capitalism; Alfred Crosby on the Columbian Exchange; C. Vann Woodward on the Compromise of 1877; Thomas Paterson on the Cuban Missile Crisis; Spencie Love on Charles Drew; Alfred Chandler on Pierre Du Pont; William Gillette on the Fifteenth Amendment; Garry Wills on the Gettysburg Address; Michael Les Benedict on Impeachment; Joyce Appleby on Individualism; Daniel Feller on Andrew Jackson; Jerald Combs on Jay's Treaty; Leon Fink on the Knights of Labor; Thomas Dublin on the Lowell Mills; Daniel Singal on Modernist Culture; Willi Paul Adams on Thomas Paine; David Edwin Harrell on Pentecostalism; Gene Clanton on the Populist Party; Samuel Haber on Professionalization; Robert Crunden on the Progressive Era; Mark Noll on Religion; Lance Banning on the Revolutionary Era; Wayne Flynt on Rural Life; Edward Larson on the Scopes Trial; Winthrop Jordan on Slave Uprisings and Resistance; Stuart Blumin on Social Class; Dan Carter on the Scottsboro Case; Lois Banner on Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Robert Ferrell on Harry Truman; Justin Kaplan on Mark Twain; and some 1,350 other entries. This is practically a "Best of American History" book (and if Oxford were not such a classy publisher, it could have marketed the book along those lines).

Editor-in-Chief Paul Boyer oversaw a group of associate editors, each in charge of a specific area: Melvyn Dubofsky (business, labor, and economic history), Eric Monkkonen (social history), Ronald Numbers (history of science, medicine, and technology), David Oshinsky (political and legal history), and Emily Rosenberg (diplomatic and military history). Boyer himself supervised the entries on cultural and intellectual history. "The hundreds of historians who have collaborated in the creation of The Oxford Companion to United States History have done so out of a shared conviction that history matters," Boyer wrote in the introduction. "A sense of the past makes civilization possible and helps us all grasp the larger meaning and context of our individual lives." He might have added that this approach also helps us understand the current state of American historiography. Boyer and his associate editors, the hundreds of contributors, and especially Oxford University Press are to be commended for bringing us this volume.

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