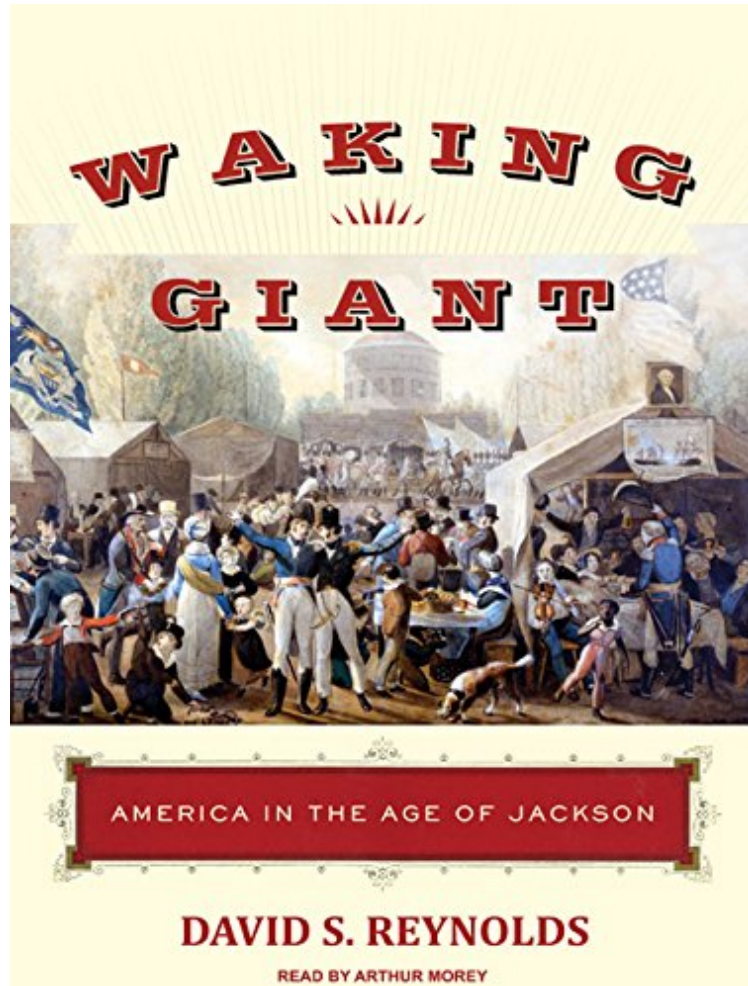


[Free] Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson

Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson

David S. Reynolds

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David S. Reynolds : Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Engaging Survey of a Wondrous Era By William C. Breihan I had thought David Walker Howe's "What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848" (2007) was the final word on this period of U.S. history. But having read Reynolds' excellent study of Whitman, I decided to give "Waking Giant" a chance. I was not disappointed. Walker's work is more comprehensive than Reynolds' - going deeper into the political and especially economic changes of the period. Reynolds' strong suit is social and cultural history. After reading chapter 4, "God's Many Kingdoms" - a fascinating journey through the religious upheavals of the time - I thought, this is the author's most solid contribution; this chapter alone makes the book. Then I read the following two chapters on reform movements, literature, the arts, fads, inventions - overall, a notably rich cultural

survey. This is not to suggest that "Waking Giant" is merely a cultural history of the Jackson era. Over half the book is devoted to politics, and here the treatment is more than just competent. I gained several new insights into the phenomenon that was Jackson. Calhoun and Webster become a little more comprehensible. If Walker leans toward the Whigs, Reynolds is more of a Jackson man, presenting a sympathetic appraisal of a historically controversial figure. I offer one criticism of the book: Reynolds' writing style - though fluid, lively, rich, engaging - could here and there benefit by some minor editing. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. a superb survey book of the first half of the 19th century in America By John E. Drury David Reynolds, a preeminent historian, brings together many of his writings (Whitman, John Brown, George Lippard) in this survey of 19th century America in the Age of Andrew Jackson. Calling the period one of the most culturally rich in our history, while his focus is on presidential politics (Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk), Reynolds also describes the age's pervasive Christian religiosity, its penetrating literature (Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman) and its exquisite artistry (Allston, Cole), its eccentricities, foibles and its failed struggle between the abolitionists (Garrison and others), and the Southern leaders (Calhoun and others) to confront and abolish slavery in America. Reynolds is a fine writer, never pushy, never over stressing his points, who cameos many of the major figures between 1815 and 1848. Survey books, like Reynolds', are launching pads for further reading and study and this book is surely that. He gives the reader an extensive, up-to-date bibliography of other more detailed histories. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good General History By P. R. Smith If you are not familiar with the period 1815 to 1848, this is a good general history of the era. Some topics are covered in just a couple of paragraphs, in which cases a bit more detail would have been helpful. I think the author tried very hard to give a balanced view of controversial topics such as Indian removal and slavery, which I think adds to the quality of the book. As a general history this is very informative and a good introduction. I am just starting with the 1815-48 era and am glad I read this book as it has provided topics that I can seek out for greater detail in other books.

The years from 1815 to 1848 were arguably the richest period in American life. In *Waking Giant*, award-winning historian David S. Reynolds illuminates the era's exciting political story alongside the fascinating social and cultural movements that influenced it. He casts fresh light on Andrew Jackson, who redefined the presidency, as well as John Quincy Adams and James K. Polk, who expanded the nation's territory and strengthened its position internationally. *Waking Giant* captures the turbulence of a democracy caught in the throes of the slavery controversy, the rise of capitalism, and the birth of urbanization. Reynolds reveals unknown dimensions of the Second Great Awakening with its sects, cults, and self-styled prophets. He brings alive the reformers, abolitionists, and prohibitionists who struggled to correct America's worst social ills. He uncovers the political roots of some of America's greatest authors and artists, from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe to Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand, and he re-creates the shocking phenomena that marked the age: bloody duels and violent mobs; Barnum's freaks and all-seeing mesmerists; polygamous prophets and wealthy prostitutes; table-lifting spiritualists and rabble-rousing feminists. All were crucial to the political and social ferment that led to the Civil War. Meticulously researched and masterfully written, *Waking Giant* is a brilliant chronicle of America's vibrant and tumultuous rise.

From Publishers Weekly Bancroft Prizewinning historian Reynolds (Walt Whitman's America) offers a fine addition to the literature on pre-Civil War American history in this account of the years 1815-1848. Exhilarated after defying Britain in the War of 1812, Americans redirected their energy into moving west, making money and wiping out every trace of elitism in their leaders. This resulted, after four aristocratic Virginians and two scholarly Adamses as president, in the election in 1828 of the uneducated frontiersman Andrew Jackson, who launched the unique American tradition of leaders who boast that they are no smarter than the electorate. While the politics of the era are familiar to many, even knowledgeable readers will relish the chapters on social history, in which Reynolds explains how a rapidly growing economy spurred both prudishness and prostitution, and the enormous consumption of alcohol that spawned the temperance movement. Most, according to Reynolds, took for granted that anyone not like them (blacks, Indians, perhaps even Canadians) belonged to subhuman races. Although less opinionated than Sean Wilentz and Daniel Walker Howe on this period, Reynolds delivers a straightforward, insightful history of America during its bumptious adolescence. 44 bw illus. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A terrific introduction of succinct length to a period in our history that was once ignored." ---The New York Times From the Publisher "A remarkable synthesis, impressive on many levels. . . . Reynolds applies his vast erudition to a period too often treated as mere prelude to the country's most destructive war. . . . A remarkable feat of distillation. . . . Reynolds is most adept handling the period's art and literature--he is remarkably clear-eyed about the Transcendentalists--and he brilliantly explores the religious scene's variety, tumult and frequent humbuggery. More than anything, he conveys the era's sheer weirdness." -- Kirkus s (starred review) "Bancroft Prize winner Reynolds has produced a thorough chronicle of America from 1815 to 1848. . . . His book will appeal to general history buffs and American studies students. Highly recommended." -- Library Journal "In this fluid narrative, Reynolds recounts how politics, religion, art, literature, and economics jostled in forming a distinctively national American culture. . . .

Exemplified by the intensification of feelings over slavery, the tensions in American society become vibrantly manifest in the eminent hands of Reynolds." -- Booklist "Offers a fine addition to the literature on pre-Civil War American history in this account of the years 1815-1848. . . Even knowledgeable readers will relish the chapters on social history. . . . Reynolds delivers a straightforward, insightful history of America during its bumptious adolescence." -- Publishers Weekly "A really good volume of history provides the reader with a keen sense of perspective and a genuine appreciation of the past. This is exactly what David S. Reynolds does in *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson*, which authoritatively describes the early to middle part of the American 19th Century and makes clear how important this period was to the nation's growth in sociocultural, industrial and political terms....The marvel here is how Reynolds tackles textbook material with a great deal of stylish and involving writing." -- BookPage