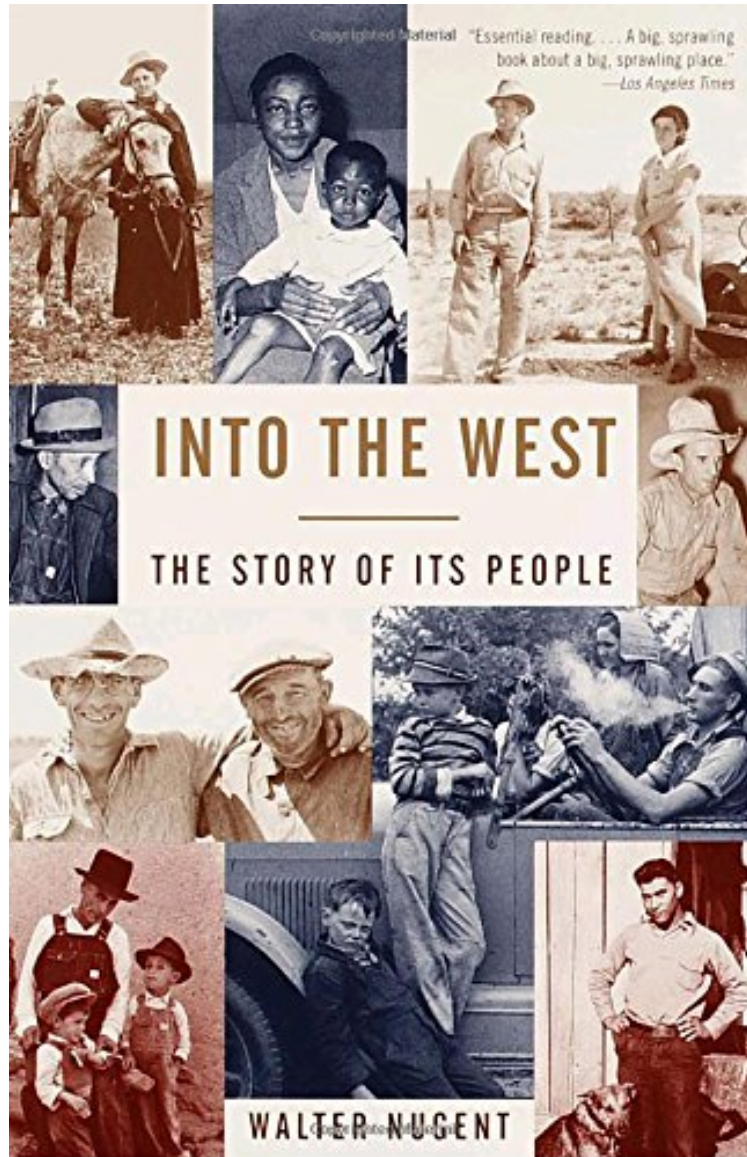


[Download] Into the West: The Story of Its People

Into the West: The Story of Its People

Walter Nugent

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Walter Nugent : Into the West: The Story of Its People before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Into the West: The Story of Its People:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By TRACY L. DAWKINS Contained good information on the migration to the west. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Into the West By J. Lindner Into The West is an engrossing, fast-paced demographic survey that characterizes development of the American west. Walter Nugent sets out to draft a people's history that omits (intentionally) political and economic theories, insofar as these

were not the primary motivators behind the book. Nugent sets out to study five myths (Jeffersonian agrarianism, exploiting resources, i.e., "Gold Rush," California Dreams, rugged individualism, and migration) that presumably have served as motivators to move west. Then, once he establishes the boundaries of the west as the Pacific Ocean and the 98th meridian, he begins his study. Nugent's style promotes undying optimism and steadfast confidence in the resiliency of the land if not always the individuals that settled it. At times Nugent seems to favor West Coast urban (Seattle, Portland, and especially California-particularly Los Angeles) as the most fortunate western areas, though the experiences of each western state serves as supporting evidence for his theories. Since the book has clearly defined geographic boundaries, there is not the temptation to view the Old Northwest or Kentucky, or even Minnesota or Missouri, as the "west." Nugent does not confuse west and frontier. Nugent draws on intricate detail to support his work. He writes of French communities in 1750 Texas, and Mormon colonies from Pocatello to San Bernadino to Mesa to Mexico. He understands what the Ogallala aquifer meant to the high plains. At times the book seems too slanted towards California, but then the nation's most populace state demands intensive evaluation. Nugent's conclusions are precise. None of his aforementioned myths wholly explain western development, but each still played a significant role to those who moved there. Jefferson would have been hard-pressed to base agrarian ideals on western homesteading. Gold Rush mentality reappeared as people sought gold, silver, various other precious metals, and oil shale. California Dreams occasionally lead to riots (1965, 1992), displacement (Japanese internment camps), or emigration to other states. Rugged individualism occasionally means beatnik, hippie, or other alternative lifestyles. Migration occasionally means returning east or back across the oceans altogether. But this is what Nugent wants to illustrate. The west is dynamic not stagnant. It is multicultural, not homogenous. *Into The West* is a fine example of one scholar's attempt to define the people of this most urban settlement area.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Piece on Western History By Robert Hutchings

Nugent's book provides a synthesis of existing literature on Western history. He acknowledges in his preface that he has no thesis, but he focuses almost entirely on the people of the West, rather than specific persons or events. His firm belief that the West has a unified history has caused him to focus on the ordinary people who, for a variety of reasons, moved into and still populate the West. His synthesis falls into ten chapters of roughly equal length, which together provide an encyclopedic overview of Western history. The first chapter lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters, asking and answering the paramount question, what is the West? After discussing the various methods historians have used to make their definitions, Nugent then explains the reasons behind immigration, juxtaposing Western settlement with human history throughout the world. Chapters two through ten are separated by chronological events. The second chapter focuses on life up to the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Careful to include what Richard Etulain would consider "postregional" scholarship, Nugent briefly explains the histories of the numerous Indian tribes and their Spanish conquerors in what is now the southwestern United States. Chapter three explains how Americans came to populate the West. From the California gold rush and Abilene-like cattle towns, to the rise of Mormon civilizations and the growth of urban areas, great events occurred which drew people from all over the world. Thus, not only was the West settled, but also it was settled with extraordinary diversity. Chapters four and seven focus on the West in eras of depression. In chapter four, titled "Defying the Depression," Nugent explains how immigrants refused to submit to substantial economic pains, making inroads in Indian Territory, building and riding railroads, and generally continuing Western expansion. Chapter seven explores the much more somber, though hardly less severe, Great Depression. With less maneuverability, the people became reliant on federal programs, and in the case of whites, on non-white immigration and repatriation laws. Chapter five, covering the years 1901-1913 looks at the end of a settlement frontier. Initially homesteading boomed and mining towns grew relative to years previous, but ultimately that era concluded. Chapter six provides a view of the tourist boom, oil growth, and the further meshing of Europeans, blacks, and Asians. The years 1914-1929 covered here also include the Mexican Revolution and the plight of Mexican-Americans, before yielding to chapter seven and the Great Depression. Chapters eight and nine are of life since the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Suddenly Japanese-Americans found themselves forcibly on the move, women at work, women giving birth, Mexicans in bracero programs, and everyone driving on interstates. Though some ebb and flow existed, only women giving birth--the baby boom--ceased by 1965. Everything else still continues in earnest what it began in 1941, even if, as in the case of the bracero program, it no longer carries the same name. Chapter ten concludes Nugent's review of Western history, observing trends, demonstrating the state of California's economy and social structure, and offering projections for the twenty-first century. Nugent has brought an interesting outline of Western history to enthusiasts and American history buffs. His synopsis is extremely complete, yielding information on all major and most minor sectors and factions that together comprise the historical West. In focusing on the people at large rather than on a handful of well-known personages, he is able to draw a more complete picture of life, and thereby give the reader a greater sense of what pushed and pulled the West into what it is today. The book is also very well written. With flowing prose Nugent conveys his ideas to the reader, easily avoiding the trap of overestimating one's audience that often befalls academics who wish to write for the non-scholar. For these reasons, I highly recommend it to casual readers interested in any aspect of American history. For the more academic reader, however, Nugent's book offers little of which the reader is not already at least vaguely aware. One of the principle flaws in a work of synopsis is that

it brings no new insights. There is no reinterpretation, no new examination, no exploration of newly uncovered source material. If one is ignorant of the subject matter, it will be thought provoking and worthwhile; if one is knowledgeable, it will be boring and a waste of time. Consequently, for scholars in the field, the only relevance *Into the West* has is as a literary timeline. The lone exception would be for those scholars who also are teachers, and who might be able to use the book for instruction. For everyone else, Nugent's book is not worth more than a quick glance or, at best, a skimming.

Acclaimed historian Walter Nugent brings us what is perhaps the most comprehensive and fascinating account to date of the peopling of the American West. In this epic social-demographic history, Nugent explores the populations of the West as they grow, change and intersect from the Paleo-Indians, the Spanish Conquistadors, to displaced Okies, wartime African American immigrants, and all the disparate groups that have made California the most ethnically diverse state in the union. Their tale, in all its complexity, is a tale that surprises, that subverts traditional stereotypes and that illuminates the multifaceted character of one of the world's most unique and dynamic territories.

.com When he was a teenager, growing up in New York, Walter Nugent's only knowledge of the West came through *Dragnet* and B-movies, watching "cops and villains speed along streets lined with palm trees." For many in the East, the Midwest, and the South, the Great West has remained terra incognita, a diverse, dynamic region with mythic origins and enormous influence over our culture and economics. With the benefit of an outsider's eyes, Nugent has constructed "a new, unified history of the people of the West from earliest times to the present," answering why people came west and why, for the most part, they stayed. Because Nugent has conceived a "social-demographic history ... a history of the people, not of their politics or other doings," he warns readers not to look for chapter breaks at 1776, 1865, or 1945--economic booms and depressions played a bigger role in the West than politicians and generals, it seems. Likewise, geography is contested, receiving knowing treatment as Nugent digs into whether the West is the "Plains to the Pacific, or just Dodge City to the Sierras." Nugent successfully pursues broad themes, such as the region's rapid urbanization and its central role in the baby boom and the death of homesteading. But *Into the West* shows equal affection for the more personal stories, such as the extended conflict between Anglos and braceros in the Great Plains and the nascent rise of turn-of-the-century tourism (the Rock Island Railroad promised in 1903 that "a month in California will do you more good than all the medicine in Christendom"). --Paul Hughes
From Publishers Weekly
Nugent's vibrant multicultural history of the American West shatters a number of myths. He finds that the popular mythology of an Old West of wagon trains, Indian raids and range wars is an "entirely Anglocentric" narrative that conceals the West's richly diverse ethnic and racial heritage. His boldly inclusive chronicle begins with Paleo-Indians like the Mogollon people, who settled the mountains east of Phoenix, Ariz., by 300 B.C. As he summarizes how Spanish missionaries, soldiers and ordinary people penetrated the Southwest and California, converting, decimating, interacting with and transforming the lives of Native Americans, he evokes a West that existed as something more than the proving ground of manifest destiny for the young American republic. Based on excerpts from letters, memoirs and testimonies of pioneers, his eye-opening mosaic gives us a West of Basque shepherders and restaurateurs; Ukrainian and Greek railroad workers; Polish, Swiss and Croat miners; migrant workers dispossessed by the 1890s depression. Nugent persuasively argues that, between 1914 and 1929, the West spearheaded the country's fundamental shift from rural to urban. With a keen eye, he examines recent trends, such as resurgent environmentalism, depopulation of rural areas, the postwar baby boom (most explosive in the nation's six westernmost states) and the advent of Latinos as the West's largest minority. Nugent's picture of the real West is a complex, multicultural and, above all, real. It serves as a modern alternative, if not a correction, to Frederick Jackson Turner's classic *The Frontier in American History*. Photos, maps. (Dec.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
Beyond its geography, the American West is defined by the people who settled it. Nugent (*Crossings: The Great Atlantic Migrations*), a respected social historian, has written a unique population history of the West, presenting a chronology of occupation and succession that begins with the Paleo-Indians and continues to the end of this century. He also discusses how the variety of people has contributed to the economic and political diversity of the region. The one problem is the question of balance, as much greater emphasis is placed on the 20th century than on preceding years. Still, this remains an engaging and interesting work, with numerous useful maps and an excellent bibliography. Recommended for public and academic libraries.
ADaniel D. Liestman, Hale Lib., Kansas State Univ., Manhattan
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