



SMALL TOWN AMERICA

A Narrative History 1620-The Present
Richard Lingeman

Small Town America A Narrative History 1620 The Present

Robert Wuthnow



Small Town America A Narrative History 1620 The Present:

Small Town America Richard R. Lingeman, 1980 The history of America is the history of its small towns For better or worse small town values convictions and attitudes have shaped the psyche of this nation This book chronicles the rise and fall of small towns from the Atlantic to the Pacific and interweaves the story of their development with the main strands of American history inside flap

Small-Town America Robert Wuthnow, 2015-05-26 A revealing examination of small town life More than thirty million Americans live in small out of the way places Many of them could have joined the vast majority of Americans who live in cities and suburbs They could live closer to more lucrative careers and convenient shopping a wider range of educational opportunities and more robust health care But they have opted to live differently In *Small Town America* we meet factory workers shop owners retirees teachers clergy and mayors residents who show neighborliness in small ways but who also worry about everything from school closings and their children s futures to the ups and downs of the local economy Drawing on more than seven hundred in depth interviews in hundreds of towns across America and three decades of census data Robert Wuthnow shows the fragility of community in small towns He covers a host of topics including the symbols and rituals of small town life the roles of formal and informal leaders the social role of religious congregations the perception of moral and economic decline and the myriad ways residents in small towns make sense of their own lives Wuthnow also tackles difficult issues such as class and race abortion homosexuality and substance abuse *Small Town America* paints a rich panorama of individuals who reside in small communities finding that for many people living in a small town is an important part of self identity

The Little Theatre on the Square Beth Conway Shervey, 2000 Beth Conway Shervey examines the cultural consequences of an Equity theatre in a small midwestern farm town Although many in the Midwest and beyond know the story of The Little Theatre On The Square in Sullivan Illinois Shervey is the first to consider what the existence of such a theatre means to perceptions of life in the town To tell the story of Sullivan and of its star theatre in a cornfield from the perspective of the residents involved Shervey uses oral history and and dozens of photographs by David W Mobley the theatre s longtime photographer Sullivan resembles most small towns in the Midwest and The Little Theatre differs little from most professional summer stock theatres Yet taken together the small town and its theatre are clearly unusual and the existence of the theatre obviously alters perceptions of life in the small town Before the theatre opened in 1957 Sullivan decidedly was a product of its time the town sported a strong local chapter of the WCTU moral people avoided taverns liberals and Catholics were the minorities and the population was predominantly white While the theatre didn t effect instant change it did introduce people to Sullivan who were obviously different Stars such as Betty Grable Cesar Romero Margaret Hamilton and Pat O'Brien came into town Aspiring actors and those behind the scenes also mingled with the residents of Sullivan As a result Shervey finds Sullivan faced such issues as racism homophobia urban liberalism and alcohol consumption at a much faster rate than similar towns For some the theatre disrupted a sense of the

normal for others the theatre made life in Sullivan different and interesting breaking the restrictive bonds typically associated with small towns

Real Politics Jean Bethke Elshtain, 2000-03-10 One of America's foremost public intellectuals Jean Bethke Elshtain has been on the frontlines in the most hotly contested and deeply divisive issues of our time Now in *Real Politics* Elshtain gives further proof of her willingness to speak her mind courting disagreement and even censure from those who prefer their ideologies neat At the center of Elshtain's work is a passionate concern with the relationship between political rhetoric and political action For Elshtain politics is a sphere of concrete responsibility Political speech should therefore approach the richness of actual lives and commitments rather than present impossible utopias In her essays Elshtain finds in the writings of Václav Havel Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus a language appropriate to the complexity of everyday life and politics and she critiques philosophers and writers who distance us from a concrete embodied world She argues against those repressive strains within contemporary feminism which insist that families and even sexual differentiation are inherently oppressive Along the way she challenges an ideology of victimization that too often loses sight of individual victims in its pursuit of abstract goals Elshtain reaffirms the quirky and by no means simple pleasures of small town life as a microcosm of the human condition and considers the current crisis in American education and its consequences for democracy Beyond exploring the details of political life over the past two decades *Real Politics* advocates a via media politics that avoids unacceptable extremes and serves as a model for responsible political discourse Throughout her diverse and insightful writings Elshtain champions a civic philosophy that tends to the dignity of everyday life as a democratic imperative of the first order Jean Bethke Elshtain is a person of rare intellect The moral wisdom that pervades these essays reminds us that when all is said and done politics is about the life and death of real people who are anything but abstractions Her erudition is remarkable but equally stunning is her eye for the significant What she is so good at is helping us see the moral and political significance of the everyday Stanley Hauerwas Duke University *Real Politics* serves as a forceful reminder that Jean Elshtain has been dealing with the real world in twenty five years of powerful essaying Transcending ideological categories she writes out of hope that human beings can enjoy those capacities of reason and faith which make them human It is a pleasure to be reintroduced to her sustained intelligence Alan Wolfe Boston University

Local Glories Ann Satterthwaite, 2016-02-23 By 1900 opera houses were everywhere but in the twentieth century radio and movies and later television and changing tastes made these opera houses seem obsolete Some were demolished while others languished for decades until stalwart revivers discovered them again in the 1970s By considering states with distinctly different histories principally New York Maine Nebraska Vermont and Colorado Ann Satterthwaite explores the creative social and communal roles of the thousands of opera houses that flourished in small towns across the country

American Capitals Christian Montès, 2014-01-10 State capitals are an indelible part of the American psyche spatial representations of state power and national identity Learning them by heart is a rite of passage in grade school a pedagogical exercise that emphasizes the

importance of committing place names to memory But geographers have yet to analyze state capitals in any depth In *American Capitals* Christian Mont s takes us on a well researched journey across America from Augusta to Sacramento Albany to Baton Rouge shedding light along the way on the historical circumstances that led to their appointment their success or failure and their evolution over time While all state capitals have a number of characteristics in common as symbols of the state as embodiments of political power and decision making as public spaces with private interests Mont s does not interpret them through a single lens in large part because of the differences in their spatial and historical evolutionary patterns Some have remained small while others have evolved into bustling metropolises and Mont s explores the dynamics of change and growth All but eleven state capitals were established in the nineteenth century thirty five before 1861 but rather astonishingly only eight of the fifty states have maintained their original capitals Despite their revered status as the most monumental and historical cities in America capitals come from surprisingly humble beginnings often plagued by instability conflict hostility and corruption Mont s reminds us of the period in which they came about an era of pioneer and idealized territorial vision coupled with a still evolving American citizenry and democracy

Real Democracy Frank M. Bryan, 2010-03-15 Relying on an astounding collection of more than three decades of firsthand research Frank M Bryan examines one of the purest forms of American democracy the New England town meeting At these meetings usually held once a year all eligible citizens of the town may become legislators they meet in face to face assemblies debate the issues on the agenda and vote on them And although these meetings are natural laboratories for democracy very few scholars have systematically investigated them A nationally recognized expert on this topic Bryan has now done just that Studying 1 500 town meetings in his home state of Vermont he and his students recorded a staggering amount of data about them 238 603 acts of participation by 63 140 citizens in 210 different towns Drawing on this evidence as well as on evocative witness accounts from casual observers to no lesser a light than Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Bryan paints a vivid picture of how real democracy works Among the many fascinating questions he explores why attendance varies sharply with town size how citizens resolve conflicts in open forums and how men and women behave differently in town meetings In the end Bryan interprets this brand of local government to find evidence for its considerable staying power as the most authentic and meaningful form of direct democracy Giving us a rare glimpse into how democracy works in the real world Bryan presents here an unorthodox and definitive book on this most cherished of American institutions

Building The Dream Gwendolyn Wright, 2012-05-09 For Gwendolyn Wright the houses of America are the diaries of the American people They create a fascinating chronicle of the way we have lived and a reflection of every political economic or social issue we have been concerned with Why did plantation owners build uniform cabins for their slaves Why were all the walls in nineteenth century tenements painted white Why did the parlor suddenly disappear from middle class houses at the turn of the century How did the federal highway system change the way millions of Americans raised their families *Building the Dream* introduces the

parade of people policies and ideologies that have shaped the course of our daily lives by shaping the rooms we have grown up in In the row houses of colonial Philadelphia the luxury apartments of New York City the prefab houses of Levittown and the public housing towers of Chicago Wright discovers revealing clues to our past and a new way of looking at such contemporary issues as integration sustainable energy the needs of the elderly and how we define family *Democracy's Schools* Johann N. Neem,2017-08 The unknown history of American public education At a time when Americans are debating the future of public education Johann N Neem tells the inspiring story of how and why Americans built a robust public school system in the decades between the Revolution and the Civil War It s a story in which ordinary people in towns across the country worked together to form districts and build schoolhouses and reformers sought to expand tax support and give every child a liberal education By the time of the Civil War most northern states had made common schools free and many southern states were heading in the same direction Americans made schooling a public good Yet back then like today Americans disagreed over the kind of education needed who should pay for it and how schools should be governed Neem explores the history and meaning of these disagreements As Americans debated teachers and students went about the daily work of teaching and learning Neem takes us into the classrooms of yore so that we may experience public schools from the perspective of the people whose daily lives were most affected by them Ultimately Neem concludes public schools encouraged a diverse people to see themselves as one nation By studying the origins of America s public schools Neem urges us to focus on the defining features of democratic education promoting equality nurturing human beings preparing citizens and fostering civic solidarity **Urban People and Places** Daniel Joseph Monti,Michael Ian Borer,Lyn C. Macgregor,2014-02-10 Providing a thorough and comprehensive survey of the contemporary urban world that is accessible to students Urban People and Places The Sociology of Cities Suburbs and Towns will give balanced treatment to both the process by which cities are built i e urbanization and the ways of life practiced by people that live and work in more urban places i e urbanism unlike most core texts in this area Whereas most texts focus on the socio economic causes of urbanization this text analyses the cultural component how the physical construction of places is in part a product of cultural beliefs ideas and practices and also how the culture of those who live work and play in various places is shaped structured and controlled by the built environment Inasmuch as the primary focus will be on the United States global discussion is composed with an eye toward showing how U S cities suburbs and towns are different and alike from their counterparts in Africa Asia and Central and South America **After the Gold Rush** Ralph Mann,1982 A Stanford University Press classic This book is a study of the two largest California gold mining towns Grass Valley and Nevada City from 1849 to 1870 This is an analysis of mining towns based on the premise that Western American history is largely an urban history and the aftermath of the Gold Rush of 1849 offers a unique opportunity to investigate the rapid development of town society

Small-Town Dreams John E. Miller,2014-03-28 We live these days in a virtual nation of cities and celebrities dreaming a

small town America rendered ever stranger by purveyors of nostalgia and dark visionaries from Sherwood Anderson to David Lynch And yet it is the small town that world of local character and neighborhood lore that dreamed the America we know today and the small town boy like those whose stories this book tells who made it real In these life stories beginning in 1890 with frontier historian Frederick Jackson Turner and moving up to the present with global shopkeeper Sam Walton a history of middle America unfolds as entrepreneurs and teachers like Henry Ford George Washington Carver and Walt Disney artists and entertainers like Thomas Hart Benton Grant Wood Carl Sandburg and Johnny Carson political figures like William McKinley William Jennings Bryan and Ronald Reagan and athletes like Bob Feller and John Wooden by turns engender and illustrate the extraordinary cultural shifts that have transformed the Midwest and through the Midwest the nation and the world Many of these men are familiar icons even Ford and Reagan certainly Ernie Pyle Sinclair Lewis James Dean and Lawrence Welk and others like artists Oscar Micheaux and John Steuart Curry economist Alvin Hansen and composer Meredith Willson less so But in their stories as John E Miller tells them all appear in a new light unique in their backgrounds and accomplishments united only in the way their lives reveal the persisting shaping power of place and particularly the Midwest on the cultural imagination and national consciousness In a thoroughly engaging style Miller introduces us to the small town Midwestern boys who became these all American characters privileging us with insights that pierce the public images of politicians and businessmen thinkers and entertainers alike From the smell of the farm the sounds and silences of hamlets and county seats the schoolyard athletics and classroom instruction and theatrical performance we follow these men to their moments of inspiration innovation and fame observing the workings of the small town past in their very different relationships with the larger world Their stories reveal in an intimate way how profoundly childhood experiences shape personal identity and how deeply place figures in the mapping of thought belief ambition and life s course

Main Street Movies Martin L. Johnson, 2018-01-23 See yourself in the movies Prior to the advent of the home movie camera and the ubiquitousness of the camera phone there was the local film This cultural phenomenon produced across the country from the 1890s to the 1950s gave ordinary people a chance to be on the silver screen without leaving their hometowns Through these movies residents could see themselves in the same theaters where they saw major Hollywood motion pictures Traveling filmmakers plied their trade in small towns and cities where these films were received by locals as being part of the larger cinema experience With access to the rare film clips under discussion *Main Street Movies* documents the diversity and longevity of local film production and examines how itinerant filmmakers responded to industry changes to keep sponsors and audiences satisfied From town pride films in the 1910s to Hollywood knockoffs in the 1930s local films captured not just images of local people and places but also ideas about the function and meaning of cinema that continue to resonate today

Free to All Abigail A. Van Slyck, 1998-07-20 Familiar landmarks in hundreds of American towns Carnegie libraries have shaped the public library experience of generations of Americans and today seen far from controversial In *Free to All*

however Abigail Van Slyck shows that the classical facades and symmetrical plans of these buildings often mask the complex and contentious circumstances of their construction and use **American Empire** Joshua Freeman,2013-08-06 A landmark history of postwar America and the second volume in the Penguin History of the United States series edited by Eric Foner In this momentous work acclaimed labor historian Joshua B Freeman presents an epic portrait of the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century revealing a nation galvanized by change even as conflict seethed within its borders Beginning in 1945 he charts the astounding rise of the labor movement and its pitched struggle with the bastions of American capitalism in the 1940s and 50s untangling the complicated threads between the workers agenda and that of the civil rights and women s movements Through the lens of civil rights the Cold War struggle and the labor movement American Empire teaches us something profound about our past while illuminating the issues that continue to animate American political discourse today

Main Street in Crisis Catherine McNicol Stock,1997-09-01 This study of class during the Great Depression is the first to examine a relatively neglected geographical area the northern plains states of North and South Dakota from a social and cultural perspective Surveying the values and ideals of the old midd **Main Street Public Library** Wayne A. Wiegand,2011-10-02 The United States has more public libraries than it has McDonald s restaurants By any measure the American public library is a heavily used and ubiquitous institution Popular thinking identifies the public library as a neutral agency that protects democratic ideals by guarding against censorship as it makes information available to people from all walks of life Among librarians this idea is known as the library faith But is the American public library as democratic as it appears to be In Main Street Public Library eminent library historian Wayne Wiegand studies four emblematic small town libraries in the Midwest from the late nineteenth century through the federal Library Service Act of 1956 and shows that these institutions served a much different purpose than is so often perceived Rather than acting as neutral institutions that are vital to democracy the libraries of Sauk Centre Minnesota Osage Iowa Rhinelander Wisconsin and Lexington Michigan were actually mediating community literary values and providing a public space for the construction of social harmony These libraries and the librarians who ran them were often just as susceptible to the political and social pressures of their time as any other public institution By analyzing the collections of all four libraries and revealing what was being read and why certain acquisitions were passed over Wiegand challenges both traditional perceptions and professional rhetoric about the role of libraries in our small town communities While the American public library has become essential to its local community it is for reasons significantly different than those articulated by the library faith **Settling the Canadian-American West, 1890-1915** John William Bennett,1995-01-01 This anthropological history tells the story of homesteading and community organization in the Canadian American West through personal reminiscences and locally written histories John W Bennett and Seena B Kohl interpret those stories through the lenses of history and social science and they present a view of settlement experience as one phase of the evolving postfrontier society and culture of western North America Settling the

Canadian American West 1890 1915 contains a synthesis of Canadian and U S settlement experiences giving to the extent possible equal space to both sides of the international boundary The experiences of people in these adjacent territories were virtually identical with emigrant populations from the same countries and socioeconomic strata Among other aspects of the homesteading experience the authors explore the interactive adaptation that developed in the West Networks of mutual aid reverently remembered by the voices found in these pages eased the inevitable hardships

American Far West in the Twentieth Century Earl S. Pomeroy, 2008-10-21 In this richly insightful survey that represents the culmination of decades of research a leading western specialist argues that the unique history of the American West did not end in the year 1900 as is commonly assumed but was shaped as much if not more by events and innovations in the twentieth century Earl Pomeroy gathers copious information on economic political social intellectual and business issues thoughtfully evaluates it and draws a new and more nuanced portrait of the West than has ever been depicted before Pomeroy mines extensive published and unpublished sources to show how the post 1900 West charted a path that was influenced by but separate from the rest of the country and the world He deals not only with the West s transition from an agricultural to an urban region but also with the important contributions of minority racial and ethnic groups and women in that transformation Pomeroy describes a modern West increasingly urban transnational and multicultural that has overcome much of the isolation that challenged it at an earlier time His final book is nothing short of the definitive source on that West

Landscape and Images John R. Stilgoe, 2015-02-12 John Stilgoe is just looking around This is more difficult than it sounds particularly in our mediated age when advances in both theory and technology too often seek to replace the visual evidence before our own eyes rather than complement it We are surrounded by landscapes charged with our past and yet from our earliest schooldays we are instructed not to stare out the window Someone who stops to look isn t only a rarity he or she is suspect Landscape and Images records a lifetime spent observing America s constructed landscapes Stilgoe s essays follow the eclectic trains of thought that have resulted from his observation from the postcard preference for sunsets over sunrises to the concept of teen geography to the unwillingness of Americans to walk up and down stairs In Stilgoe s hands the subject of jack o lanterns becomes an occasion to explore centuries old concepts of boundaries and trespassing and to examine why this originally pagan symbol has persisted into our own age Even something as mundane as putting the cat out before going to bed is traced back to fears of unwatched animals and an untended frontier fireplace Stilgoe ponders the forgotten connections between politics and painted landscapes and asks why a country whose vast majority lives less than a hundred miles from a coast nonetheless looks to the rural Midwest for the classic image of itself At times breathtaking in their erudition the essays collected here are as meticulously researched as they are elegantly written Stilgoe s observations speak to specialists whether they be artists historians or environmental designers as well as to the common reader Our landscapes constitute a fascinating history of accident and intent The proof says Stilgoe is all around us

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