



A Dictionary of American History

By Thomas L. Purvis

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This book is concise, easy -to-use guide to the individuals, peoples, parties, movements, events, decisions and wars that have shaped the history of the United States.

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A Dictionary of American History By Thomas L. Purvis Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

There have been surprisingly few attempts at one-volume dictionaries of American history and none that has achieved status as a classic. This may result from the difficulty in reaching a consensus on what is important enough to be included.

Undaunted, Purvis, associate editor of the *American National Biography* (forthcoming), and author of a recent monograph on Colonial New Jersey, offers us the first new dictionary since Michael Martin and Leonard Gelber's revised *Dictionary of American History* was published in 1981. Conceived as a quick-reference tool for high-school teachers and college professors working outside their specialization, as well as for history students and the general public, it includes some 3,000 short entries. The emphasis is on facts and events rather than interpretation. This is by design since the author believes that there has been a general de-emphasis upon factual knowledge in recent historical writing.

Alphabetical entries are arranged word by word with coverage extending from the colonial period to the present. We are assured by the publisher that full attention has been paid to African American, women's and American Indian history. A comparison of the *N* entries with Martin and Gelber reveals 121 entries compared with 141 in Purvis. In fact there seems little agreement on what is significant. About one-third of the entries are unique to one volume or the other.

Purvis has the advantage of currency with entries on the Clintons (Hillary is under *Rodham*), Colin Powell, Newt Gingrich, and the Rodney King incident. There are no entries for Ralph Nader or Edward Kennedy, or for such modern-day entrepreneurs as Ray Kroc or Sam Walton. A few errors of fact have crept in. Purvis confuses the Treaty of Paris of 1783 with that of the same name of 1763 in an entry on Florida, incorrectly sets the boundary of East Florida at the Perdido River, and misspells Perdido in an entry for West Florida.

Overall, however, the selection of entries seems judicious and more helpful than that in Martin and Gelber and other similar works. It serves well its stated purpose of being an up-to-date one-volume reference for office and home use. Libraries with scores of more specialized reference works on American history may consider it as a supplementary purchase only.

Review

"It is fascinating, satisfying and richly informed. Each entry is a brilliant piece of American history or biography in ruthlessly summarized form." *Contemporary Review*

"The selection of entries seems judicious and more helpful than that in Martin and Gelber and other similar works; an up-to-date one-volume reference for office and home use." *Reference for Books Bulletin*

"This dictionary will surely become a stand-by for a generation of students, teachers and researchers." *Reference Books*

"Immensely useful to all engaged in the study of the American past. It will save them many hours of frustration in the search for essential but often elusive information." *Reference Books*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond Levine:

This book entitled A Dictionary of American History to be one of several books this best seller in this year, this is because when you read this publication you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy this book in the book shop or you can order it by means of online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, as you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason for you to past this book from your list.

Michelle Bachman:

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Alicia Romero:

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the relaxing pattern this is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

Alexandra Stafford:

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