Good Books about History, 2012-13

Reviews by members of the OLLI-GMU History Club

Compiled by Tom Hady

Compiler's Note: With our decision a few years ago to include historical fiction, the question of what to call "history" has become more difficult. I view my role as limited. I will occasionally ask a contributor whether this belongs in a history compilation, but I generally accept their conclusion. Other than that, I compile the reviews put them in a common format, and do a very limited amount of editing.--TFH.

F. Clever Bald, *Michigan in Four Centuries* (1954, 1961), reviewed by Don Ferrett.

This book was written in 1954 and updated in the spring of 1961. It therefore omits the last half century. A possible benefit of such a history is that it leaves out the decline of the Rust Belt in general and of Detroit/Flint/Lansing as manufacturing centers. The author claims to have written a comprehensive history of the state in only 500 pages, and for the most part has achieved this goal.

Bald, who was a Professor of History and Director of Historical Collections of the University of Michigan, begins this work with a discussion of the geology of the Great Lakes Basin and the first humans to live there. He then describes (much too briefly for my tastes) the area through control by the French, British, and final takeover by the United States. He also skims over Michigan's painful path to statehood and the impact it had on the other states formed from the Old Northwest.

I learned a lot from this book about the actual settlement of the state by a diverse group of populations, and how they did or did not merge into a unified culture. Keys to this settlement were land sales, transportation (ships, roads, and railroads), extractive economies (lumbering and mining), farming, and manufacturing (from carriages to automobiles). To aid in the presentation, the author included 10 maps, 32 pages of photographs, a Michigan chronology, a list of Governors, and a bibliography.

Antony Beevor, *The Second World War* (2012), reviewed by Almuth Payne

The Washington Post called this book "THE definitive history of WW II" in a praise-filled review. At almost 800 pp. it provides an extensive overview of every theater of war around the world and takes an often critical look at each of the major leaders and generals involved. Yet he also includes experiences of ordinary soldiers and civilians, so that one really feels the truism that "war is hell." Beevor is the author of several books about WWII (*Stalingrad*, *D-Day*, and *The Fall of Berlin*) and I highly recommend them along with this one to all the WWII buffs.

John D. Bergamini *The Tragic Dynasty: A History of the Romanovs* (1969), reviewed by Almuth Payne

The Romanovs first came to the Russian throne in 1613 and ruled until the last one, Nicholas II, and his family were murdered in 1918. In between there were numerous murders among family members, assassinations, some brilliant and some mentally deficient rulers, religious mystics, several German princesses who became more Russian than the Russians (Catherine the Great and the last Tsarina), and enough weirdness and outrageous drama to provide the plots for many operas.

James Barron, *Piano: The Making of a Steinway Concert Grand* (2006), reviewed by Tom Hady

This is primarily the story of the making of a Steinway concert grand piano, from the first bending of the frame to its final arrival in Steinway's fleet of pianos lent to concert halls. Though that is an interesting story, it would not qualify the book for this list. Along the way, though, there is a good bit of history of pianos in general and of the Steinway companies in particular. This was a Christmas gift book that found its mark; I enjoyed it very much.

Harry Bernstein, *The Invisible Wall* (2008), reviewed by Christine Brooks

A memoir about a Jewish family in a small English town on the eve of World War I.

Steve Berry, *The Columbus Affair* (2013), reviewed by Ben Gold

This is a fictional take on the story of Columbus and the Jews in the New World. He was called by many names—Columb, Colom, Colón—but we know him as

Christopher Columbus. Many questions about him exist. Where was he born, raised, and educated? Where did he die? How did he discover the New World? Again, we consider whether Columbus was Jewish and whether he had a secret mission on his voyages to Jamaica. The novel repeats many of the facts related in *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean*. Five hundred years after his fourth and last voyage to the New World, the Admiral of the Ocean Sea is back in the news again. Convinced that Columbus, of whose life nearly nothing is known for certain, took to his grave the secret location of a gold mine in Jamaica, various characters team up to find out if this is true and if so, where is it. The ultimate goal, the author gradually reveals, is that Columbus' lost gold mine is only chicken feed compared to the real bonanza at stake.

Isabella L. Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1960) reviewed by Tom Hady

From September to December of 1873, Bird, then in her early 40's travelled the Front Range of the Rockies from Estes Park to Denver to Colorado Springs, spending much of her time in the mountains, alone. These are the letters that she wrote home, originally published in a British magazine in 1878. They are an interesting account of life on the Colorado frontier and of a woman who seemed to take pride in her ability to cope. She successfully completed trips by herself through mountain snows on trails that were easy to lose even when they were <u>not</u> covered by snow. Accommodations were at whatever log house was available when she arrived, and were very primitive in most cases. Snow blowing between unchinked logs all night was a common occurrence. Along with the natural hazards of the frontier, she found herself out of money and choosing between food for herself and food for her horse when a banking panic shut off access to her funds from England.

Jeremy Black, *A New History of Wales* (2000), reviewed by Tom Hady

Here is Wales from before the English conquest to after World War II, in 239 pages. At times, when Black is discussing 15th C. nobility, it reads like a Russian novel; you feel the need for a scorecard to keep the characters straight. But then he shifts to more general political or social events, and you keep reading. Not the most gripping book I read this year, but probably worth the $4 I paid for it at a book sale.

Fergus M Bordewich, *Washington: the Making of the American Capital* (2008), reviewed by Tom Hady

Most people know of the compromise that led to the location of the Capital on the banks of the Potomac. Fewer have heard of the compromise of 1796, when the Capitol and "President's House" were in danger of abandonment for lack of funds, that led southern congressmen to agree to vote funds to carry out the Jay treaty (which they hated) in return for northern votes to appropriate money for building the capital city. Bordewich tells the whole, at times sordid, story of the building of Washtington, from its selection (and the role of the dinner at Jefferson's) through multiple shortages of funds to the first meeting of Congress in the north wing of the Capitol, the only part finished, on November 22, 1800.

H. W. Brands, *The Money Men: Capitalism, Democracy, and the Hundred Years' War Over the American Dollar* (2006), reviewed by Tom Hady

Brands' real contribution in this book is not his pictures of the "Money Men," though he paints those. The signal contribution of this book is to put each of them into their place in the flow of U. S. monetary and financial history. The book is more a financial history of the United States than a biography of Hamilton, Cooke, Gould, Morgan and the other players in our financial history who populate the pages.

If American financial history is one of your interests, I highly recommend the book. Best of all, despite the reduced state of the Fairfax County Public Library in recent years, they have it!

Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (1972), reviewed by Don Ferrett.

During my research for the lecture titled "The Americas to 1610" for OLLI, I frequently ran across references to this book. It sounded interesting, but I didn't have the opportunity to read it then. Fortunately, I decided to order it from Amazon.

Crosby does what I would consider an excellent job of covering the exchanges of plants, animals, and microbes that resulted from the European discovery of the new world, and the impacts of those exchanges on the peoples of both worlds. For the new world, there were the devastating outbreaks of old world diseases, and the beneficial introduction of animals such as sheep, cattle, and, especially, horses. For the old world, the most important benefit was from the importation of new world food crops such as corn and the potato. The still-open question of the direction of

transfer of syphilis is discussed in some detail--the answer may never be known. Crosby also includes several maps showing the global distribution of human blood types, highlighting the length of time that the two worlds had been separated prior to 1492. All in all, this is a highly readable, entertaining, and enlightening book. I highly recommend it.

Edward Everet Dale, *Cow Country* (1941, reprinted 1965), reviewed by Tom Hady

This is a readable and interesting account of the history of cattle ranching on the Great Plains in the latter part of the 18th century. Dale was a rancher before going on to a Ph.D. and a history professorship at Oklahoma, so he combines the skills of an historian with an understanding of the industry and its problems.

George E. Davidson, *Red Rock Eden, The Story of Fruita* (1986), reviewed by Tom Hady

Fruita was an early settlement in what is now Capitol Reef National Park. The term "early" is relative—that part of Utah was one of the last parts of the frontier to be settled. Until 1962, Fruita was connected to the east by the "Blue Dugway," a "starkly picturesque, lonely and slow wagon road." The book (a pamphlet of 63 pages, published by the Capitol Reef Natural History Assn.) is probably not worth ordering just for general reading, but if you are visiting Capitol Reef, stop at the visitor center, buy it, and read it at your first opportunity. It will enhance your visit. Davidson was Chief of Interpretation at Capitol Reef.

Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations* (2011), reviewed by Tom Hady

In 738 pages, Davies reviews a number of former European states that you never heard of (such as Tolosa), and a few you have (CCCP)—15 in all. He goes into considerable detail about the known history of each. Unless you have a real passion for the detail of European history, or want to know who King Teudebur was for a trivia contest, you will not want to read the book from cover to cover. You are likely to find some chapters and countries, though, that will interest you. For example, this reviewer found the chapter on "Borussia, the watery land of the Prusai" added to my knowledge of the history of the Baltic area, which I am interested in because of my Scandinavian heritage.

King Teudebur? Teudebur map Beli ruled in the Firth of Clyde, and probably died in 752.

Wade Davis, *River Notes: A Natural and Human History of the Colorado* (2013), reviewed by Tom Hady

A short book, about 150 pages, that can be read in a couple of evenings to get an overview of the history of the Colorado valley. It is especially good for the feel of what John Wesley Powell and his crew must have felt as they explored the river for the first time. Davis discusses both the Native American history and the Mormon settlement, but not extensively. He clearly thinks the dams on the river should never have been built.

Edmund De Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2011), reviewed by Christine Brooks

About a Jewish family in World War II who lose everything and what happens to the next generations.

E.L. Doctorow, *The March* (2006), reviewed by Penny Hughes

The March (not to be confused with another book called *March* by Geraldine Brooks) is one of the most magnificently written books I have ever read. Doctorow is a master of creating a picture but also a master of character development. This book is based on fact--Sherman's march to the sea. Doctorow has woven a magnificent tapestry. The threads are the experiences of various characters who join the march as stragglers. They felt safer, leaving their past in ruins, being with the powerful Union force than on their own. The march becomes much more than a force of 65,000 Union soldiers breaking the back of the Confederacy on their way to the sea. It is a history of human experience.

The March defines Sherman's character much more humanely than how most in Georgia felt about him then and even now. He defined a new approach to war, one that had never been used before. The reader is given windows into his feelings and his decision-making. Did he order the burning of Columbia, SC? Read and find out the truth.

Pearl stands on the porch of her home, or rather that of her father James Jameson who has just departed with wife and valuables. Alone, Pearl steps into a new life, one that she had not ever imagined.

These two characters are one of many threads that weave together the story of this momentous event that changed lives forever. The swath of this force was relentless, sweeping all even close to it into its path.

What was it like for these people to be swept up by a tsunami of force: Plantation owners, proud and unbending, confused former slaves with no idea what freedom feels like, Confederate soldiers in the brig finding opportunity for a new life, and ordinary soldiers facing angry civilians.

The experience living history through *The March* is so much more than I can express here. I will say that if you read history to understand how world events affect ordinary people, this is the book for your library. *The March* is a social history of great catastrophe and great opportunity. You will see this cataclysmic event through a new lens after marching with the characters in this book.

Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days* (1898, reprinted 1974), reviewed by Tom Hady

This book is a piece of history in itself, having been written more than 100 years ago. Earle describes in considerable detail all the activities of home and community life in the Colonial period. Her description of clearing the roads after a snowstorm is an example. Each of several appointed road-masters hitched his team of oxen to the plow, and plowed the road as far as the next farm, where that farmer's team was added to the hitch—and so on, until sometimes 15 or 20 yoke of oxen were on the plow. Each road master plowed the road to the tavern in the center of the town—and the population followed. There was much business at the tavern that day.

Jamie Ford, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* (2009), reviewed by Christine Brooks

Historical fiction about Chinese and Japanese in Seattle during World War II. Describes prejudice and the internment camps

Nancy Gibbs & Michael Duffy, ***The Presidents Club*** (2012), reviewed by Carole Richard

The "Presidents Club" is just that, the story of the most exclusive club in the world. Only former and current presidents of the USA are allowed and the book takes you

behind the headlines on how they have interacted over the years in both support and advice. I found it fascinating, especially the parts about Nixon.

Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine* (1976), Holt, Rinehart & Winston), reviewed by Tom Hady

It would be easy to assume from the title that this was another history-of-invention book. It is, but it is much more. Gimpel describes the evolution of the economies of the 10th through the 14th centuries. He tells of the first public clock in Paris (1300) and the astronomical clocks of the same period, but he also discusses the profound effect that having time marked on public clocks had on the structure of society and of work. He marks the transition from monometallism (silver) through most of the medieval time to the reintroduction of gold in France in 1254 and chronicles the later debasement of the currency and resulting inflation under Phillip the Fair, beginning in 1294. A most interesting book.

Matthew Goodman, *Eighty Days: Nelly Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's History-Making Race Around the World* (2013), reviewed by Irene Osterman

On November 14, 1889, Nellie Bly, a reporter for Pulitzer's newspaper The World, set sail across the Atlantic. Her goal was to go around the world in less than the 80 days taken by the fictional Phineas Fogg. That same morning the publisher of the monthly magazine Cosmopolitan got the idea of sending a rival female around the world to make it a race. With some difficulty, he persuaded his literary editor Elizabeth Bisland to undertake the journey. That afternoon, 8 hours behind Bly, Bisland set off by train across the US. Bly was halfway through the trip before she learned she had a rival. This book describes their travels around the world and their lives before and after the race. It also provides interesting descriptions of the time. It is an easy read.

David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (2008), reviewed by Bruce Valoris

This book about the Korean War is long at 657 pages and a bit of a challenge, especially starting out, but it was worth it in the end. I didn't come across many books on Korean War so I was interested in this one. It is eye-opening about just how difficult it was for the American soldiers for many reasons. It has interesting insights about General MacArthur. You go away understanding him a lot better--but mostly the book is critical of him (and justifiably so).

Francis Haynes, *The Buffalo: The story of American bison and their hunters from prehistoric times to the present* (1970), reviewed by Tom Hady

At the first European settlement, vast herds of buffalo (Haynes uses that term, rather than "bison") roamed most of the present US. Haynes traces their history, and more than incidentally, the history of non-Indian settlement of the country through the era of the buffalo hunters and the near extermination of the species by the 1880's. An academic historian, Haynes wrote extensively on the American west.

Dorothy Hartley, *Lost Country Life* (1979), reviewed by Tom Hady

"How English country folk lived, worked, threshed, thatched, rolled fleece, milled corn, brewed mead…" The 15th century farmer did not have a GPS-guided tractor that knew exactly how much seed and fertilizer to put on the particular corner of the field it was in at the moment, but the farmer with his ox team still had a lot of folk knowledge, the results of centuries of trial and error, to guide his daily activities. Hartley explicates some of that knowledge—perhaps more than most of us wanted to know!

Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* (2010), reviewed by Almuth Payne

This is the story of Louis Zamperini, an elite level track star headed for the 1936 Olympics. He joined the Air Force, was shot down over the Pacific and managed to survive 46 days on a raft, only to be captured by the Japanese where he spent nightmarish years with brutal jailers until the end of the war.

Robert J. Hemming, *Ships Gone Missing: The Great Lakes Storm of 1913*, (1992), reviewed by Don Ferrett.

There have been a number of notable storms on the Great Lakes, but none compare to the one of November 1913. A dozen ships were completely destroyed (some never found), another two dozen were badly damaged, and almost 300 crewmen and passengers died in that four day storm. The author here tells the story of that storm using official records and accounts of survivors (where there were any). There are many tales of people who had premonitions of disaster, who missed a ship sailing due to illness (and were saved), or who felt they had to make

just one more trip (and were lost). There are several photographs of damaged or destroyed ships, and even one of bodies washed up on the beach in Goderich, Ontario. In his epilogue, the author discusses several later storms, including the one in which the Edmund Fitzgerald was lost. Don't mess with the gales of November!

Rose Houk, *Dwellers of the Rainbow: The Fremont Culture in Capitol Reef Country* (1986), reviewed by Tom Hady

Original Americans of the Fremont Culture occupied southeastern Utah 1000 years ago. They did not build pueblos like their neighbors in Mesa Verde, but they left a variety of artifacts, including extensive petroglyphs and a distinctive moccasin design. Houk tells their story, at least in a limited way. As with the Davidson book (also reviewed here, and also published by the Capitol Reef Natural History Assn.), this short book is a good adjunct to a visit to Capitol Reef. The author is a professional writer who has done books related to a number of other national parks.

Ole Klindt-Jensen, *The World of the Vikings* (1970), reviewed by Tom Hady

With many illustrations by Svenolov Ehrén, this is a readable and interesting account of the Vikings and their time. Klindt-Jensen was associated with the Danish National Museum and Aarhus University and wrote extensively on the Vikings. Ehrén's illustrations add more to the depth of the story than is usual in books of this type. For example, a picture of a goldsmith's mold from north Jutland showing that the goldsmith made crosses and Thor's hammer at the same time vividly illustrates the process of Christianization.

Edward Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean* (2009), reviewed by Ben Gold

This is a highly intriguing account of the Jewish exodus to the New World and how they took their revenge upon the Spanish for the Inquisition. The Inquisition forced many Jews to flee Spain and Portugal and many went to the New World as explorers and merchants. Others became outlaws, practicing piracy on the high seas. Sephardic Jewish pirates in ships with names such as *Prophet Samue*l, *Queen Esther*, and *Shield of Abraham* plundered Spanish possesses for riches and revenge.

The island of Jamaica belonged to the family of Christopher Columbus, and provided a safe haven for Jews otherwise outlawed in the New World. The

Inquisition, while ravaging throughout the rest of the New World never came to Jamaica. Over 20% of Kingston's population were Jews of Portuguese-Spanish ancestry. As ship owners and shipping agents throughout the Spanish territories, they passed coded messages about Spanish shipping and their treasure ships so that pirates could capture them. Much of the damage to Spain was in retaliation for the Inquisition. His raises the question: Was Columbus Jewish?

Of the famous Jewish pirates of the Caribbean were Moses Cohen Henriques who captured the Spanish Silver fleet, a billion dollar haul in today's currency and Jean Lafitte, a hero at the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812, who wrote: "my Jewish-Spanish grandmother, a witness at the time of the Inquisition, inspired in me a hatred of the Spanish crown.

Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*, (2002), reviewed by Don Ferrett

As Monty Python used to say, "And now for something completely different." In this book, Kurlansky tells the history of the world by tracing human activities surrounding a single commodity: salt. Many of the stories included give fascinating insights into the importance of salt to humanity. Through salt, he explains why humans settled where they did, what they ate, why wars were fought, and how rebellions occurred as a result of salt taxes. The author also includes a number of recipes from ancient to modern times that highlight the use of salt.

My only criticisms are that the author is occasionally redundant, and that the ending is somewhat weak. All in all, I found this book to make very interesting reading. It actually made me think!

Eva LaPlant, *Marmee and Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa and Her Mother* (2012), reviewed by Christine Brooks

The story of Louisa May Alcott and her mother and the writing of Little Women.

Erik Larson*, In the Garden of the Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* (2011), reviewed by Almuth Payne

William Dodd, a University of Chicago history professor, became US Ambassador to Nazi Germany in 1933. He moved to Berlin with his wife and glamorous daughter Martha who plunges into the social life, flirting with SS officers as well as with disaster. A fascinating look at Nazi Germany in its early stages.

Erik Larson, *In the Garden of Beasts* (2012), reviewed by Christine Brooks

About events leading up to World War II in Germany. The story of the American Ambassador and his family in Berlin.

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* (2003), reviewed by Almuth Payne

This story was the focus of a lecture in one of the National Park Service Potpourri series several seasons ago. It vividly describes the building of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair which after many problems, both in finances and construction, became a stunningly beautiful "white city.." The architect and major designer was Daniel H. Burnham. The devil of the title was a shady character, Dr. H.H. Holmes, who built a big hotel with space to stash his numerous murder victims. The fair also introduced the Ferris wheel to the world, something to compete with the Eiffel Tower at the previous world's fair. This book reads like a murder mystery.

Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution That Transformed the South* (2013), Random House, reviewed by Irene Osterman

This is a well written and researched book which focuses on the social side of the Civil War. It looks at all the groups in the South-plantation owners, poor whites, soldiers, slaves and free blacks and follows how they reacted as the war dragged on. It also examines how Lincoln's views evolved along with those who lived in the North. Levine quotes from many first hand sources which enhances the story. I learned about the peace movement which arose in parts of the South, the high rate of desertion, and the resistance of planters to providing the support needed by the Confederacy

Edward Janusz, *Fading Echoes from the Baltic Shores* (2012), reviewed by Ed Sadtler

This book, based on handwritten accounts by the author's mother, along with much additional research, resurrects a world that dreamed along the southern shores of the Baltic Sea for generations, only to find itself squeezed between the armies of Stalin and Hitler during WWII. It is a story of endurance, perseverance, and survival, but also a documentation of broader events driving masses of refugees from the Baltic region to new worlds. As such, it exemplifies, in my judgment, the way history can be written, and often is not. The author breathes life into his subject, thus helping the reader *feel* what it was like to exist in certain places at certain times. I wouldn't recommend experiencing first-hand these places at these times. But I do recommend reading the book. It will take you quite close enough.

Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters, Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (2009), reviewed by Michael J. Kastle.

This book describes how the Mercenary *Condotta*, or Contract, system worked. The author describes how contracts were negotiated, written, monitored, and completed. This book covers the period from the late 14th century thru early 16th century. The author follows the timeline for most of the book, but the focus of the book is on how the soldiers, the contracts, and the employers evolved over time. The majority of the material is from archives of the city states of northern Italy. This is an excellent read for those who are interested in Mercenary, or using the current vernacular 'Private Military Company', organization and structure.. This book has a few illustrations, an extensive index, no bibliography, and extensive bibliographical notes for each chapter. This is a non-fiction work.

Alf J. Mapp, Jr., *Thomas Jefferson: Passionate Pilgrim* (1991), reviewed by Bob Persell

This is my very favorite biography of Jefferson. This book is the second of a two volume biography and covers Jefferson's life from 1801 until his death in 1826. It was a period of significant events: the bitter 1800 election, the Burr conspiracy, Jefferson's confrontation with his cousin, John Marshall, the quasi-war with France, the embargo and the War of 1812.

Meacham's recent biography is good, but it doesn't bring Jefferson to life. Professor Mapp's anecdotal stories and liberal use of direct quotes make

fascinating reading. For example, Mapp tells of how Jefferson befriended an unfortunate British officer who was living in Norfolk when the war was declared. He was captured and sent to Charlottesville; Jefferson invited him to dinner, found out that he had been a brew master in London and hired him to make beer at Monticello.

Jefferson had a passion for individual freedom and the fundamental contradiction between slavery and Jefferson's declaration that all men are created equal is something that has tarnished Jefferson's reputation through the years. The fact is that Jefferson tried several times to pass legislation to end slavery. He was intellectually opposed to it, but saw that the country was not ready for emancipation; it was "more good than the nation can bear."

Jefferson confided his opinions on prominent public figures in various letters to his friends. He described Washington as follows: "he was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man." Napoleon was dismissed as a "lion in the field", but overall he was "a great scoundrel." Jefferson also had a charming description whereby he likened the aging process to the wearing out of a clock whose parts give way to the ravages of time.

Jefferson had a full and productive life. Interestingly enough he singled out three accomplishments for his tombstone:

Here was buried

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Author of the Declaration of American Independence,

Of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom,

and Father of the University of Virginia

Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (2006), reviewed by Bob Bohall

The incarceration rate in the U.S. is the highest in the world today. America represents 5 percent of the world's population, nearly one-quarter of the world's inmates have been incarcerated in the U.S. in recent years. This was an objective and readable overview of the factors leading up to our current prison population,

sentencing laws, "the war on drugs", and racial demographics of imprisonment. Mauer discusses the rise of "tough on crime," crime as politics, the prison-crime connection, African Americans and the criminal justice system, what class has to do with it, "give the public what it wants - media images and crime policy, the consequences intended and unintended, and where are we heading with one in three black boys and one in six Latino boys destined to spend time in prison during their lifetime. The Sentencing Project is recognized as one of the best nonprofits in the country, providing analysis and working with the Congress on criminal justice issues. More recent numbers and data are available currently in the press but little has changed since 2006. A useful and informative history. Mauer is Executive Director of The Sentencing Project.

Jon Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* (2012), reviewed by Bob Bohall

I enjoyed this overview of a remarkable man. The book is very readable, one to slowly digest and think of the times. Also, I was struck that his presidential years were akin to much of the rancor we see today in politics. I now understand why we have the Jefferson monument and how much we owe to his leadership. He has to be one of the best.

Jefferson was a major player in the Revolution and the Declaration of Independence with words and ideas; an astute politician in Philadelphia, New York and eventually the capitol on the Potomac with a sense of the promise of America. He was a man of appetite, sensuality, passion and elegant dinners in Paris and Monticello. US President from 1801 to 1809, the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, an embargo delaying a young nation's war with Britain, and the founding of the University of Virginia were all part of his legacy. So were his generosity, his debts and his many years with his wife Patty and later, his slave and companion Sally Hemings. Ironic were his differences with John Adams and their eventual reconciliation, numerous letters and their deaths on July 4, 1826. Very worthwhile and enjoyable! Not a fast read.

Jon Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* (2012), reviewed by Bob Persell

This is an eloquently written biography of perhaps the most complex of the founding fathers. While many focus on the visionary side of Jefferson, Meachum emphasizes that Jefferson was also a masterful politician, a man with a genius for creative flexibility. In Jefferson's words "what is practical must often control what is pure theory."

He sees Jefferson as both a philospher and a politician; a man who hated disorder and loved harmony, a man with a need for power and control. Jefferson's compelling goal was the "survival and success of popular government in America."

Meachum's contribution is that he highlights Jefferson's political skill and ability to compromise. As a UVA graduate I'm sorry he didn't devote more time to Jefferson's establishment of the University of Virginia, but this book makes a major contribution to understanding Mr. Jefferson and the history of the United States.

Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (1966), reviewed by Tom Hady

Here is economic history written by someone who understands economics. It is the best analysis of the underlying trends and causes of the changes in the economy during the period before the Civil War that I have seen. The author received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1993.

Sharon Kay Penman's historical novels**,** reviewed by Almuth Payne

I like all her novels because I like the Middle Ages in which most of them are set, but I'd like to recommend especially her trilogy about Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine and their contentious brood of sons.

1) ***When Christ and His Saints Slept*** (Ballantine Books, 1995) deals with the civil war involving King Stephen and Empress Maude and how Henry finally came to the English throne

2) ***Time and Chance*** (Putnam's Sons, 2002)is about the tempestuous marriage of Henry II and Eleanor, and their growing family

3) ***Devil's Brood*** (Ballantine Books, 2009)describes the constant battles between Henry and his sons as well as those among his sons; Eleanor takes sides against her husband and is exiled from court.

Not part of the trilogy but related is ***Lionheart,*** (Ballantine Books, 2013) the story of Eleanor's favorite son, Richard, and his adventures during the Third Crusade in the Holy Land.

Michael Reed, *The Age of Exuberance: 1550-1700* (1986), reviewed by Tom Hady

Part of a series, *The Making of Britain*, this is a history of the landscape of the country, and through the changes in the landscape, a picture of much of the social and economic history of Great Britain in the period. This was the time of great change in building techniques and a period when transportation improved significantly and people and goods began to move more freely. Reed is an academic historian, at Loughborough University, and he writes well.

Jasper Ridley, *A Brief History of The Tudor Age* (2002), reviewed by Tom Hady

Ridley chronicles life and events in England from Henry Tudor's defeat of Richard II in 1485 to the death of Elizabeth I in 1603. At the beginning of this time, England was arguably just another country in Europe. By the end, one sees the beginning of Imperial England of later centuries, though there is still a long way to go. This is primarily an account of English social and economic institutions of the period, rather than of military and political events. I found it very interesting.

Andrew Roberts*, Masters and Commanders – How Four Titans (Roosevelt, Churchill, Marshall, Alan Brooke) Won the War in the West* (2008), reviewed by Ed Janusz

The book reconstructs the formal and informal interactions of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill with each other, and with their senior military advisers, General Marshall and General Sir Alan Brooke, in evaluating the US-UK strategic partnership that produced victory in the West in WWII. Of particular interest is the authors' examination of how the contentious debates over strategy and resources were shaped by politics, personalities of the four principals, and by differing views on both military matters and the desired outcome for post-war Europe. I highly recommend the book to those interested in strategy at levels where politics and military considerations intersect.

Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—But Some Don't* (2012), reviewed by Bob Bohall

Silver achieved fame in the 2012 United States presidential election: he correctly predicted the winner of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. That same year, Silver's predictions of U.S. Senate races were correct in 31 of 33 states; he

predicted Republican victory in North Dakota and Montana, where Democrats won. Although his book topped the best seller list briefly, I have struggled with it. The focus is too technical and not necessarily about the past election. Folks into predictions and math will appreciate the text and I likely will finish the book. Good book, well done, not light reading. I should have given it a more careful look before making the purchase.

Laura J. Snyder, *The Philosophical Breakfast Club* (2011), reviewed by Tom Hady

In 1812, four undergraduates at Cambridge University discovered they shared a common interest in the philosophy of science, and began meeting for breakfast on Sunday mornings, after compulsory chapel. The four, Charles Babbage, John Herschel, William Whewell and Richard Jones, went on to play key roles in the development of modern science. Indeed, Whewell suggested the name, "scientist," which eventually supplanted "natural philosopher." Snyder traces the development of scientific thought during their lives, a period when what we now call the scientific method developed.

I originally became aware of this book when I heard Snyder, a professor at St. John's University, lecture on it at the Smithsonian Institution. That was a fortunate evening; the book is one of the most interesting I have read this year.

Ian W. Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of The U.S. Navy*, (2006), reviewed by Don Ferrett

I read this book shortly after completing *The War for All the Oceans* (Adkins and Adkins). Both books cover the time period from the late 1700s to the end of the War of 1812, but are from completely different perspectives. The Adkins present the War of 1812 as a side show to the Napoleonic Wars and demonstrate how little attention Britain paid to it. To Toll, this was the great period of the founding of the U.S. Navy and he emphasizes how important the war and these ships were to the new nation.

Toll covers this period in three phases, beginning with the debates between the Federalists, led by John Adams, and Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson, over whether or not to have any Army or Navy. The debates were spirited and remind one that there is not much new in politics in the last 200 years. The second phase was the actual use of these ships against a foreign power (in this case, the Barbary pirates). Finally, there was the big war, the one against the greatest sea power in the world.

The author's coverage of the personalities involved in directing the nation, and those who were selected to build the ships and lead the new Navy is remarkably detailed, as is his information on the actual construction of the ships.

Geoffrey Trease, *The Condottieri, Soldiers of Fortune* (1971), reviewed by Michael J. Kastle.

This book describes the major mercenary Captains in the late 14th century thru the dawn of the 16th century and the start of the Italian Renaissance. Rather than following a concise timeline, from the advent of the Free Companies into Italy following the end of the Hundred Years war, this book describes in detail the lives of the major Captains and their influences on the politics of the time. In many cases these Captains went on to found their own Great houses and combined the rule of a city, either benign or despotic, and the continued practice of selling his services to other cities. The major cities discussed are Milan, Florence, Venice, Naples, and the Papal States. The author describes the transition from foreign born Captains to Italian born captains, by the mid 15th century. The author has a very readable style, the book flows, and the reader is not bogged down in minutia. This is an excellent read for those who are interested in the history of Italy before the Renaissance. This book has many illustrations, an extensive index, a modest bibliography, and no foot or end notes. This is a non-fiction work.

United States Life-Saving Service Heritage Association, *They Had To Go Out...*, (2007), reviewed by Don Ferrett

The United States Life-Saving Service formally began operation in 1878, assisting vessels in distress along the ocean coasts, the Great Lakes shores, and even on the Ohio River (one station-Louisville). The mission and most of the people were

merged with those of the Revenue Cutter Service to form the US Coast Guard in 1915. This work is a compilation of 25 articles, by various authors, from "Wreck & Rescue," the journal of the United States Life-Saving Service Heritage Association. Included are a number of photographs of the Life-Saving Stations, the men (surfmen), and the ships they did or didn't save. The stories include information on the training of the men, the equipment they used, and the procedures they followed to rescue people from a variety of highly dangerous situations. They describe such tales of heroism that one wonders why anyone would ever go to sea. Their motto was "They had to go out, they didn't have to come back!"

William Urban, *Medieval Mercenaries, The Business of War* (2006), reviewed by Michael J. Kastle.

This book describes the business of a Mercenary, briefly touching Greece and Rome, but starting in earnest with the late 10th century and ending with the 16th century and the start of the Italian Renaissance. The author's focus is primarily on activities north of the Alps, with a lot of time spent on the Baltic area (his primary area of focus in other books). The author discusses the 100 Years War and the maturation of Chivalry during this bloody period. The last third of the book discussed mercenary activity in Italy. The author's syntax may sometimes leave the reader a little puzzled. This is an excellent read for those who are interested in the overall history of mercenary activities in Europe before the Renaissance. This book has some illustrations, an extensive index, an extensive bibliography by chapter, and no foot or end notes. This is a non-fiction work.

William Urban, *Bayonets for Hire, Mercenaries at War 1550-1789* (2007), reviewed by Michael J. Kastle.

This book covers mercenary activities in Europe, primarily north of the Alps. The major multi-national conflicts are discussed. The discussion also includes who made up the various groups of soldiers for hire and what socioeconomic conditions led these individual to hire out their services. The siege of Vienna and the attendant wars with the Ottoman empire are also covered. This is an excellent read for those who are interested in the overall history of mercenary activities in Europe post 16th century and up to the French Revolution. The author's syntax may sometimes leave the reader a little puzzled. This is an excellent read for those who are interested in the

overall history of mercenary activities in Europe after the mid 16th century. This book has some illustrations, an extensive index, an extensive bibliography, and extensive foot notes. This is a non-fiction work.

Yoshiko Uchida, *Picture Bride* (1997), reviewed by Christine Brooks

The story of a young woman from Japan coming to San Francisco to marry someone she has never met.

Simon Winchester, *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (2005), reviewed by Christine Brooks

Describes how the dictionary was originally researched and put together. The work began in 1857.

Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789 - 1815* (2009), reviewed by Bob Persell

This comprehensive volume is part of the distinguished Oxford History of the United States. Professor Wood covers this tumultuous period where so many significant changes occurred in American life. Politics, the economy, religion, medicine all underwent major changes. Jeffersonian Republicans supplanted Federalists as the dominant political force; social distinction became based on wealth, much to the dismay of Federalists.

To the surprise of many, slavery, although eliminated in the North, actually increased in the South. The North embraced commercialism and manufacturing grew. The United States was not the exclusively agricultural nation that Jefferson had idealized. Despite the admonition of George Washington to avoid becoming embroiled in Europe's conflicts, the United States became involved in a quasi-war with France and a declared war with England

One of the more interesting revelations to me was Wood's discussion of the practice of medicine. Benjamin Rush, friend of Jefferson and a highly esteemed physician of the era, believed he was advancing medicine when he asserted that the hundreds of diseases could be reduced to one "fever", which had a single cause "convulsive tension" in the blood vessels for which the single cure was purging and bleeding. Since Dr. Rush believed the human body normally had 12 quarts of blood (actually

only 6), many of his patients died since he would frequently drain 5 quarts in a day and a half.

A nice feature of this book is its 13 page annotated bibliography.

All in all, a terrific one-volume history of a fascinating period of our country which had changed in so many ways, which had doubled in size, and which shifted its focus from the Atlantic and Europe to the West and the vast expanse of the North American continent.

Michael Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages* (2001), reviewed by Tom Hady

From Boadicea (AD 60) to William the Conqueror (1066) Wood provides a readable survey of what we know about the main rulers of Britain and their times—King Arthur, the Sutton Hoo Man, Offa, Alfred the Great, Athelstan, Eric Bloodaxe and Ethelred the Unready. Well written, interesting and recommended.

Stephen Yafa, *Cotton: The Biography of a Revolutionary Fiber* (2005, Penguin), reviewed by Tom Hady

From the Indus River in 2300 BC to the Mississippi Delta more than four millennia later, this is the history of cotton culture, manufacture and consumption, together with the author's views of the societies that produced it and their problems.