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978-0-521-84825-1 - A Concise History of the United States of America

Susan-Mary Grant

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## A Concise History of the United States of America

Born out of violence and the aspirations of its early settlers, the United States of America has become one of the world's most powerful nations, even as its past continues to inform its present and to mold its very identity as a nation. The search for nationhood and the ambiguities on which the nation was founded are at the root of this intelligent and forthright book. Taking a broadly chronological approach, it begins in colonial America as the first Europeans arrived, lured by the promise of financial profit, driven by religious piety, and accompanied by the diseases that would ravage and consume the native populations. It explores the tensions inherent in a country built on slave labor in the name of liberty; one forced to assert its unity and reassess its ideals in the face of secession and civil war; and one that struggled to establish moral supremacy, military security, and economic stability during the financial crises and global conflicts of the twentieth century. Woven through this richly crafted study of America's shifting social and political landscapes are the multiple voices of the nation's history: slaves and slave owners, revolutionaries and reformers, soldiers and statesmen, immigrants and refugees. It is their voices, together with those of today's multicultural America, that define the United States at the dawn of a new century.

Susan-Mary Grant is Professor of American History at Newcastle University. She is the author of *North over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (2000) and *The War for a Nation: The American Civil War* (2006), and editor of *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (2003) and *Themes of the American Civil War: The War Between the States* (2010).

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No general history of any nation can be accomplished without recourse to the work of other scholars and more detailed monographs on all aspects of that nation's development. In the case of the United States, one has a great wealth of scholarship to draw on. If the history of the land that became the United States of America is sometimes described as brief, its historians have more than made up for this in the depth of their analysis, the rigor of their research, and the extent of their enthusiasm. There are far too many of them to name individually, but the Guide to Further Reading at the end of this volume offers at least some indication of the range of their work, and the extent of my debt to colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic. This particular volume has benefitted from the insights afforded by those who commented on earlier drafts, to the work of Joy Mizan, to Cecilia Mackay for the pictures, and to Ken Karpinski at Aptara and the copyediting team at PETS Fox Inc for editorial expertise. Ultimately, however, it owes its existence to Peter J. Parish and its eventual appearance to the persistence, patience, and much appreciated encouragement of Marigold Acland at Cambridge University Press.