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The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton
by William E. Leuchtenburg (review)

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Journal of Southern History, Volume 83, Number 3, August 2017, pp.
723-725 (Review)

Published by The Southern Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/soh.2017.0215>

the JOURNAL OF
SOUTHERN
HISTORY

August 2017 • Vol. LXXXIII, No. 3
Published Quarterly by the
SOUTHERN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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the story of “militant anti-Communism” that gripped the nation’s political parties and takes hold of Gilmore and Sugrue’s narrative as the authors relate the Cold War maneuverings of the John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon administrations (p. 289).

The word *imperialism* does not appear in the book’s index, and like most U.S. history textbooks, *These United States* traces the republican-flavored individualism by which most modern citizens locate and orient themselves but which consistently benefits the wealthy few. The text’s chapter on the 1950s invokes the implicit bargain, tying the political structure of representative democracy to a highly unequal private economy. Paradigmatic among social movements are suffrage and school equality, stories well told by the authors through the figure of John Lewis and through the southern black freedom struggle. Suffragism and educational equity sustained the values of individualism, materialism, and generational progress, leaving corporate and technological power relatively unchallenged and the international arena to elites. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of the United States as a “beloved community” offered the most inspired alternative mythos for the United States, one with a moral grounding beyond the individual (p. 378). Barack Obama advanced this tradition, with his signature talent as a “reconciler” blending spiritual aspiration (“hope”) with traditions of economic progress and social betterment (“change”) (p. 617).

As in their opening chapter, the authors’ penultimate one deploys a slightly out-of-sync media moniker, “The New Gilded Age,” to describe the end of the twentieth century. In so doing, Gilmore and Sugrue remind readers that history is a dialogue between the past and the present, subject to revision and interpretation. Indeed, their gloss on the earlier Gilded Age, “Much had been accomplished in the United States . . . but much had been sacrificed for those triumphs,” really serves as their overall thesis (p. 2). Given the quasi-religious and highly personal nature of sacrifice, Gilmore and Sugrue’s attention to the thoughts and behaviors of individual leaders and everyday people as they struggled to do more than simply endure on someone else’s terms makes this book an especially memorable read.

Portland State University

PATRICIA A. SCHECHTER

The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. By William E. Leuchtenburg. (New York and other cities: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xvi, 886. \$39.95, ISBN 978-0-19-517616-2.)

There are many people and institutions that can impact society. Private actors, such as protesters, researchers, and businesspeople, can push and pull society. Institutions, such as Congress, the courts, and universities, can bring both progress and regression. Since the beginning of the twentieth century no entity has arguably been as influential as the American presidency. The modern presidency has often been at the center of important moments in American history. Its importance has been seen in both domestic affairs and international relations. In this new addition to the literature on twentieth-century American

political history, the preeminent historian William E. Leuchtenburg underscores the importance of the American presidency in the life of the United States.

In the 1960s, historians began focusing on other aspects of history. Social and cultural history—from the bottom up—replaced much of the focus academic historians had given to great white men and politics. Over the next several decades studies in gender, race, social movements, civil rights, and world history reflected a growing shift in focus and in employment opportunities. As political scientists became obsessed with quantitative research and increasingly jettisoned political theory, political history went out of vogue. But over the course of the last twenty years political history has begun a comeback. And the growing political instability over the last ten years, both in the United States and globally, has brought attention back to the importance of politics, especially the role of the American president. Leuchtenburg has performed a valuable service to the historical profession with this volume.

The author began this work after attending a meeting at the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. After a colleague approached him about writing a history of the American presidency, Leuchtenburg agreed and devised a two-volume study. Currently he is working on the second volume, which will cover the Constitutional Convention through the end of the nineteenth century. The main undercurrent of this work is the author's contention that American presidents shaped the twentieth century. Leuchtenburg examines every president from Theodore Roosevelt to Bill Clinton in detail. The book is designed to appeal to a broad audience. In doing so, the author presents a highly readable and informative history of the twentieth century.

Leuchtenburg proceeds in a chronological fashion, beginning with the assassination of President William McKinley in September 1901. The death ushered in a new president whose political prowess defined the presidency for a generation: Theodore Roosevelt. The author notes that Republican Party power broker Mark Hanna thought it was a "mistake" nominating Roosevelt to be vice president because of his reputation for political troublemaking (p. 23). When Roosevelt became president, the nation was entering not only a new century but also a new era in which American power would be increasingly on display. Consequently, the office of the president would have to modernize, too.

By noting the developing importance of the chief executive, Leuchtenburg underscores the fact that as industrialization and modernity transformed the United States, the nation's highest leader would have to be transformed as well. Every subsequent president built a myth around himself and sought to push a national agenda. The only exceptions were the Republican presidents of the 1920s—Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. The author explains how Woodrow Wilson expanded on the developments in the changing nation. He held a Ph.D. and had been a professor, president of Princeton University, and governor of New Jersey. Wilson brought a certain idealism attractive to Progressives. Yet President Wilson's achievements, such as the Federal Reserve, the Federal Trade Commission, the Nineteenth Amendment, and others, failed to inspire confidence as World War I and the restraints

brought on by the war and domestic tensions drove a great many Americans into the Republican camp by 1920.

Leuchtenburg notes correctly the vast importance of Franklin D. Roosevelt to Americans' shifting dependence on the White House for political leadership. FDR entered office at a time of crisis. His election led to a realignment of American politics. In a complex world, strong leadership in one man was seen as necessary to the fulfillment of the sacred duties of the federal government. It is noteworthy to mention Leuchtenburg's criticism of presidents when they took more power than was constitutional or wise.

Leuchtenburg has written a wonderful book. That being said, it is somewhat curious that he did not write the volume on the earlier twenty-five presidents first. It would have helped to have that volume as a reference. All students of the presidency will greatly benefit from such a fine work from one of America's most distinguished historians.

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DARYL A. CARTER

Leisure, Plantations, and the Making of a New South: The Sporting Plantations of the South Carolina Lowcountry and Red Hills Region, 1900–1940. Edited by Julia Brock and Daniel Vivian. *New Studies in Southern History.* (Lanham, Md., and other cities: Lexington Books, 2015. Pp. viii, 214. \$85.00, ISBN 978-0-7391-9578-9.)

Leisure, Plantations, and the Making of a New South: The Sporting Plantations of the South Carolina Lowcountry and Red Hills Region, 1900–1940 is a collection of essays that gives greater prominence to the creation, operation, and function of “sporting plantations”—southern estates purchased by wealthy northerners during the early twentieth century and transformed from agricultural plantations into hunting reserves and luxurious winter abodes. Editors Julia Brock and Daniel Vivian argue that these transformed plantations, concentrated in the South Carolina Lowcountry and Florida's Red Hills region, “represented a greater innovation than [is] generally recognized” (p. 3). Historians have acknowledged the purchase of southern plantations as a curious side note to large-scale northern investment in the postbellum South's economy. But scholars have paid scant attention to how the creation of sporting plantations imposed a sportsman's ethic, with its attendant game laws, on southern hunting culture; brought modern architectural and landscaping styles to old plantations; and instilled a romantic vision of antebellum plantation life on the modernizing New South. Many of the collection's essays suggest that the transformation of large-scale farms into even larger-scale hunting plantations—financier Bernard M. Baruch, for example, “amassed a 14,500-acre estate”—really constituted the making of a new Old South (p. 8).

In fact, Drew Swanson's essay, a bit of an outlier as it focuses on the preservation of Wormsloe plantation as a historic site in the Georgia Lowcountry, explicitly argues, as the title indicates, that “tending the new Old South” entailed the cultivation of a “plantation image” and the creation of