To the memory of my mother and my father
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PREFACE

American history is an epic composed of many events: colonists made their homes in a new world; soldiers fought for independence; capitalists built giant industries; and civil rights activists struggled for equality. In such episodes we encounter the emotions, thoughts, and experiences that made up the distinct worlds of the past. In the two volumes of *American Realities*, my goal has been to recreate some of those worlds and to capture the immediacy—the reality—of life as lived in other eras. I have not tried to reduce all these events to a single pattern, but in the aggregate, the chapters trace the course of American history from the distant past to the present.

Each chapter is designed to lead the reader to a better understanding of major themes in United States history. Each volume can be read by itself or in tandem with a conventional American history textbook. The standard surveys present the general patterns of the past; this book reveals in greater depth the life beneath those patterns.

These stories describe the broad contours of American history as well as the illustrative particulars. The death of Thomasine Winthrop leads us to know Puritanism better, and the flight of the *Enola Gay* to Hiroshima exhibits the harsh outlines of total war. The Lewis and Clark Expedition reveals the marvelous land on which the nation developed, and Joseph McCarthy’s career illuminates the turmoil of cold war politics.

While writing *American Realities*, I have often wished I had the novelist’s poetic license to fill gaps not covered by the sources. But fortunately, facts can be as engaging as fiction. Documents are often colorful and evocative, allowing us to listen to the deathbed conversation of John and Thomasine Winthrop, to see the light of the South Pacific from a B-29, and to enter imaginatively into the realities of other men and women.

Like ourselves, the people of the past were immersed in their times. But even while living fully in their own worlds, they bequeathed us ours. We can find historical kinship in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. George Washington is comprehensible because he was stunned when his army in Manhattan collapsed. John Muir is like most of us because he was troubled once about choosing a career. My touchstone in choosing topics for *American Realities* was that each should suggest our common humanity, even while revealing worlds distinct from our own. More simply, I had to care about the subjects and believe others could care about them as well. Through such sympathy, we come actually to live in history and feel our involvement with the past: his story and her story become our story.

The eighth edition of *American Realities* includes two new chapters, changes in others, and revised bibliographies and study guides. These guides are intended to help readers understand the chapters better with identification topics and study questions. In Volume I, I have broadened my treatment of the Texas Revolution to include the story of Sam Houston as well as Lorenzo de Zavala, showing how the careers of these fascinating individuals came together in frontier Texas. In Volume II, I have described one of the outstanding Indian leaders of the nineteenth century, Chief Joseph, and explored his role in the Nez Perce War. I have also revised the chapters on Steve Jobs and Colin Powell, bringing their stories to the present.
The effort in *American Realities* to recreate history in words is supplemented by the imaginative drawings of Cecily Moon. Ms. Moon based her illustrations on careful reading of each chapter and on personal research in historical paintings and photographs. Each drawing highlights a major theme in the chapters.

**SUPPLEMENTS**

An Instructor’s Manual is available to accompany *American Realities*. Written by Jeffrey D. Carlisle of Oklahoma City Community College in consultation with the author, this tool is designed to aid both the novice and experienced instructor in teaching American history. Each chapter includes a concise chapter overview, multiple choice questions, identification questions, and a list of topics for online research.

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