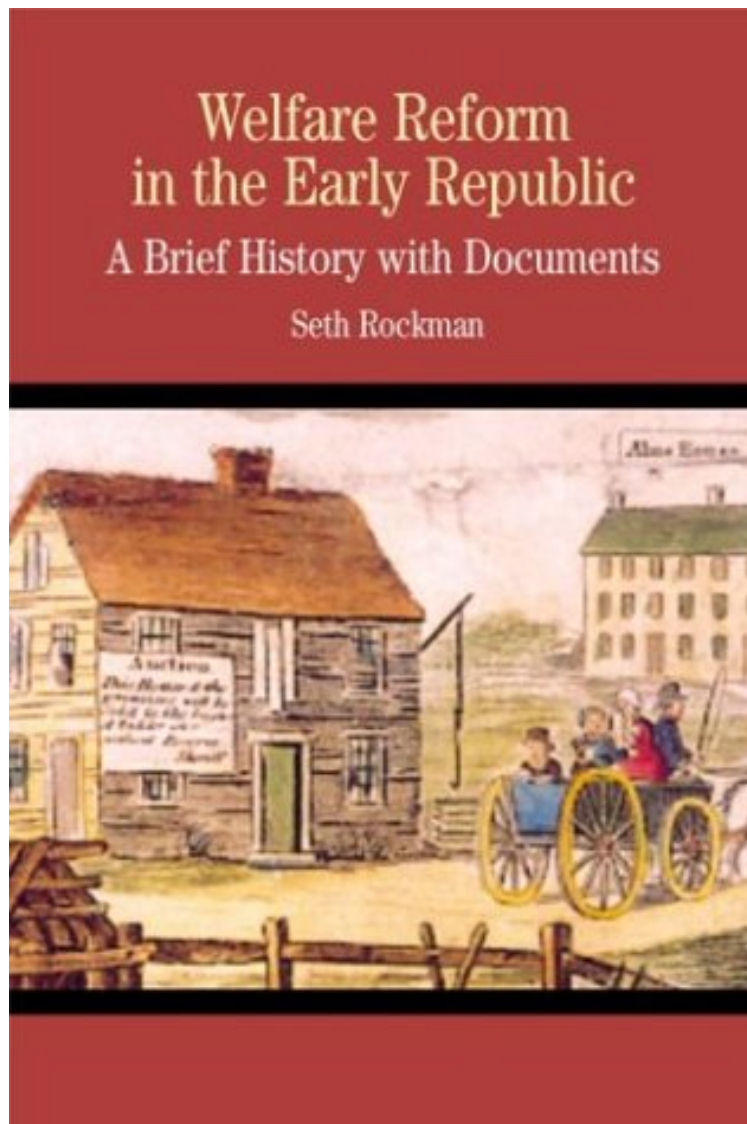


[Free] Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Series in History Culture)

Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Series in History Culture)

Seth Rockman

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Seth Rockman : Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Series in History Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Series in History Culture):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Nothing New Under the Stars and StripesBy GioDr. Rockman's

subtitle is an accurate disclosure; this is indeed a "brief history", a mere 28-page introduction to a selection of 25 documents. That brevity is all to Dr. Rockman's credit! His introduction is succinct and lucid. In it, he summarizes, with concise impartiality, the diverse thoughts about poverty and welfare expressed in the early years of the USA, beginning with the climate of opinion in England and its colonies in the century prior to the American Revolution. Many readers, I suppose, will be surprised that "welfare" and welfare reform were even under discussion in the early Republic, but the main lesson of Dr. Rockman's research is that neither the needs of the poor nor the means of assistance have changed much in the 220-some years of constitutional government. The documents that Dr. Rockman has selected, with a few modernizations of syntax, would serve just as well to express the platforms of both political parties today. A few of them would serve, indeed, to express the more radical positions advocated by ardent liberals and fervid reactionaries. Rockman's introduction is so 'fair and balanced' that it could serve as a primer for all Americans interested in welfare reform. I'd love to see it printed as a broadside and distributed at rallies for and against President Obama's proposals. The documents, I'm afraid, make rather dry reading unless the reader is actively investigating their subject, either as a historian or as an advocate of reform. Here are a few tidbits from Dr. Rockman's intro: "Poverty was also a very real problem [in the Federalist era] for public officials, political thinkers, and beleaguered taxpayers... In Salem, Massachusetts, for example, expenditures on the poor accounted for nearly 50 percent of the town's 1816 budget." "In 1830, two thousand New Yorkers spent time in the city's almshouse, while another three thousand families received outdoor relief. Roughly ten percent of the city's population tapped into the public welfare system." ['Outdoor' relief refers to welfare assistance outside any institution such as the almshouses of that era, or the homeless shelters of today. The demographics of poverty in New York in 1830 were astonishingly similar to the present; most recipients were truly needy - the infirm of body or mind, orphans and the aged, mothers and children without male support, and immigrants, especially Irish, unable to find a niche in the economy that paid well enough to sustain them. Just like today, African-Americans were disproportionately poor, and in the same vicious circle, their poverty was stigmatized as the sign of their inferiority. As Billie Holiday sang, "Them that's got shall get; them that's not shall lose."] "The rhetoric of moral reform offered one explanation: The poor were themselves to blame. Decrying the sinfulness of American society, moral reformers created a powerful stereotype of the typical relief recipient. ... It also became easier for prosperous urban residents to criticize the poor because they were increasingly strangers to one another. Whereas the rich and poor rubbed elbows in the mixed neighborhoods of colonial-era cities, the early republic witnessed the emergence of working-class districts like the infamous New York slum, Five Points. Residential segregation made it easier to depict the poor as different and defective. [Oh boy, does that sound familiar!] As moral reformers circulated their reports of urban vice throughout the country, rural Americans were confirmed in their antipathy towards cities and their inhabitants." " ... local and state governments administered a network of relief services that ultimately kept most poverty-stricken Americans from perishing in the streets. It would be a mistake to imagine some moment in the national past when the private efforts of kin, clergy, and charities alone fulfilled the needs of impoverished Americans." "!!!!" "In many regards, early republic welfare reform marked an effort to reconcile the political inheritance of the American Revolution with the new social realities of capitalism." [Now there's some unfinished business!] Ultimately, the impact of Dr. Rockman's essay is disheartening. Nothing has changed in the terms of debate, no consensus has been approached, the gap between the beneficiaries of those 'new realities of capitalism' and the victims of it has opened ever wider, and the poor are still with us.] 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book By Cheyenne I have always been skeptical about ordering books from others that I could not see; but this book that I ordered is in GREAT condition. I also received the book in a timely manner, which came in handy since this book is for college, I highly recommend buying from this person/place. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Brittany Basic, for college history.

In the decades following the American Revolution, elected officials, moral crusaders, and relief administrators scrutinized the public welfare programs that assisted thousands of impoverished people. Seth Rockman uses documents ranging from sermons to almshouse admission rolls to show how reformers investigated the causes of poverty and pursued solutions that ranged from massive institutionalization of the poor to the total abolition of public charity issues that are remarkably similar to the welfare debates of today. Also included are headnotes to the documents, questions for consideration, an annotated chronology, suggestions for further reading, and an index.

About the Author Seth Rockman (Ph.D., University of California, Davis) is an assistant professor of history at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He recently served as the advanced research fellow of the Program in Early American Economy and Society at the Library Company of Philadelphia. His scholarship focuses on capitalism, slavery, and labor in the early Republic United States, and his book-length study of wage workers in Baltimore will appear in 2004. He has published articles on women's labor and capital punishment in the early, 19th century, and writes for the History News Service.