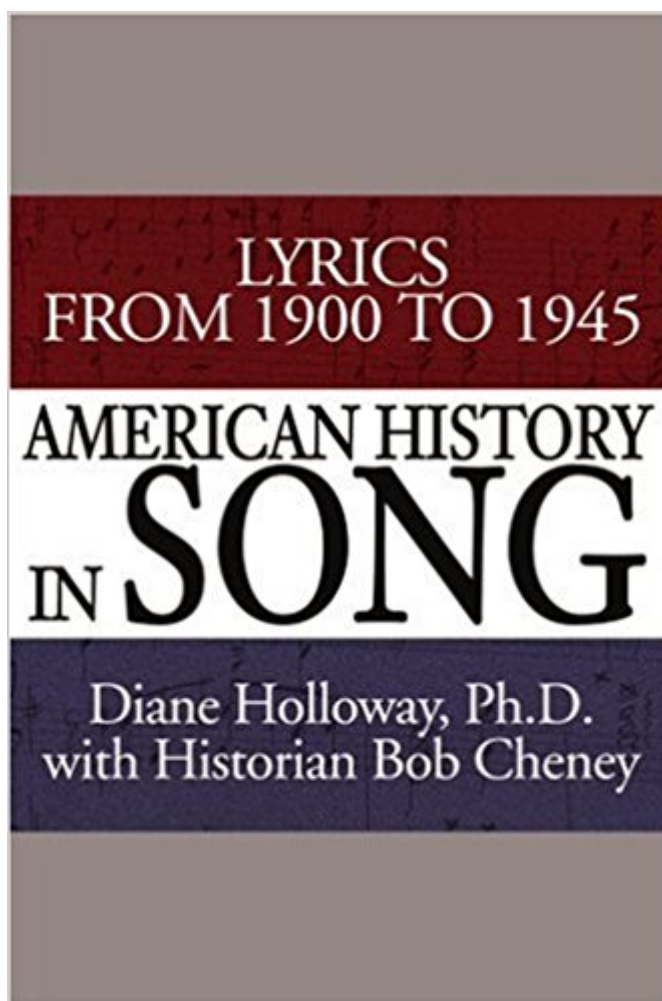




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American History In Song: Lyrics From 1900 To 1945



Synopsis

Songwriters dramatically captured the details of how Americans lived, thought and changed in the first half of the twentieth century. This book examines 1033 songs about WWI and WWII wars, presidents, Womens Suffrage, Prohibition, the Great Depression, immigration, minority stereotypes, new modes of transportation, inventions, and the changing roles of men and women. America invited immigrants and went to war to ensure democracy but within its borders, lyrics display intolerant attitudes toward women, blacks, and ethnic groups. Songs covered labor strikes, communism, lynchings, women voting and working, love, sex, airships, radio, telephones, the lure of movies and new movie star role models, drugs, smoking, and the atom bomb. History books cannot match the humor, poignancy, poetry and thrill of lyrics in describing the essence of American life as we moved from a rural white male dominated society toward an urban democracy that finally included women and minorities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Diane Holloway, Ph.D., a retired Dallas psychologist, wrote *Before You Say I Quit, The Mind of Oswald*, and *Dallas and the Jack Ruby Trial*. Bob Cheney taught history in Dallas schools and colleges for 38 years and wrote *Interrupted Lives: Hoods Texas Brigade*.

I would have given this five stars but for a few nitpicking instances where the lyrics differed slightly from the sheet music in my collection of rare American songs circa 1890s-1920, but ---this is, as I

said nitpicking. It might be that the authors were taking the lyrics as they heard them rather than as they appeared in print. I only found three cases anyhow and the sense of the song was not altered. I was pleased to find a wide range of topics, not just the usual lovelorn man/woman singing the virtues of his mate, or pining away from unrequited love. One small criticism. One of my favorites, Down in Jungle Town (1908) is characterized as a monkey song that is racist in that it analogizes African-Americans with the wild simians. I didn't get this impression at all. To me it was one of the many "monkey craze" songs of the period around 1907-1920, in which the songwriters thought it would be "cute" to endow the critters with human pretensions. Not that there weren't plenty of racist songs during that period---many of which the authors amply illustrate. I especially enjoyed the Jewish-themed song selection in which Jewish songwriters poked fun at their own roots. No doubt many of these songs were enjoyed by some anti-Semites as confirming their stereotypes. All in all this collection, conveniently arranged on a year-by-year basis, is great casual browsing and provides food for thought--- or song.

An excellent use of music lyrics to explicate the history of 1900 to 1945. Sheet music collectors may be disappointed that many sheets she uses are rare and obscure but overall a well done survey

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