

this issue would be nearly impossible; selecting the top ten might be easy (Columbus's voyage, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the New Deal, the Civil Rights movement, etc.) but selecting nos. 11 through 20, 21 through 30, and so on would spark endless debate.

The editors of *What Happened? An Encyclopedia of Events That Changed America Forever* have done a good job of selecting, describing, and interpreting the 50 events in American history that in their view had the most lasting impact on the nation. This is not a purely alphabetical encyclopedia like the venerable *Dictionary of American History* (Scribner's, 2003), nor a series of alphabetical encyclopedias for ten periods of U.S. history, as is the *Encyclopedia of American History* (Facts on File, 2003). It lists the 50 events in 4 volumes in rough chronological order. The entries average about 25 pages and include an introduction presenting the historical facts, an interpretive essay written by a specialist in the field, entries on 5 or 6 important people and events pertinent to that event, and the text of one or two significant documents. Appendixes in each volume include a timeline and a glossary.

Reference librarians may assume by the title of this work that it is a guide to battles, discoveries, riots, or the passage of landmark treaties or legislation. However, the editors have interpreted "events" to be broad social, political, and religious phenomena that in some cases span decades. The Lewis and Clark expedition does not get its own entry, but rather is one of the sub-entries under "Louisiana Purchase"; similarly, the Cuban Missile Crisis is a sub-entry under "Cold War, 1946–1991."

While the entries on the New Deal, Civil Rights movement, etc. are of high quality, this is material that will be well covered in most reference collections. What makes this work interesting and potentially valuable are the entries such as the "Suburbanization and Consumerism, 1945–1990" and "The Rise of Television, 1948–2010." Although not covered in many traditional historical reference works, these "events" have had an incalculable impact on modern American life.

What Happened? An Encyclopedia of Events That Changed America Forever is fairly expensive and could gather dust if reference librarians don't remember to incorporate its excellent entries into their recommendations for users who want to research a broad topic in American history. The essays provide a nice intermediate level of coverage for the researcher who doesn't want to start with a book, yet more extensive than a general or historical encyclopedia.—Peter Bliss, *Reference Librarian, University of California, Riverside*

World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States. Ed. by Martha B. Katz-Hyman and Kym S. Rice. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2011. 2 vol. acid free. \$180.00/set. (ISBN: 978-0-313-34942-3). E-book available (978-0-313-34943-0), call for pricing.

The experience of slavery has been referred to as "a living death." One need only scan a few lines of an entry such as

"Whips" to realize the aptness of that epithet. Objects malignant and benign crowd the pages of this novel reference work, as this is primarily a catalog of artifacts, the tangible evidence left behind in the wake of the so-called "peculiar institution." In addition to articles on manmade things, such as "Auction Blocks," "Buttons," and "Coins and Currency," there are headwords for items from the natural world as well: "Fish and Shellfish," "Sugar," and "Tobacco," being but a few examples. Rounding out the coverage of subject matter are essays on institutions within the institution of slavery, as in "Benevolent Associations" and "Underground Railroad." All of the approximately 175 entries are alphabetically arranged, are signed by the individual author that wrote it, and conclude with a short bibliography for further research. The set is illustrated with crisp black and white photographs.

The editors are well versed in their respective areas of expertise. According to the biographical sketches listed on the contributor's pages, Katz-Hyman is "an independent curator and consultant to museums on historic house furnishing and interpreting pre-Civil War African American material culture" (577). Rice is "the director of the Museum Studies Program at George Washington University and a long-time curator and consultant to museums on African American interpretation" (577). Close to 90 historians, curators, college professors and others likewise engaged in scholarly pursuits wrote the majority of the articles.

What makes this such an interesting and engaging volume is the way in which the lives of enslaved African Americans are reflected in what they ate, the tools they used, the clothes they wore and all the other physical *stuff* they either made, found or otherwise put to use. As pointed out in the Introduction, the totality of these possessions ". . . suggest the ways that material goods added richness and color to an individual's life and contributed in no small measure to creating and maintaining personal and collective identity" (xi-xii). In short, material culture is one more window through which we can observe and understand the past. The reference literature on slavery is, as one would expect, extensive, but typically consists of broad overviews of the subject. A case in point is *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio, 2007). While these are generally well researched and informative works in their own right, the uniqueness of *World of a Slave* is that, aside from breaking new ground, the narrow focus permits in-depth discussion of an overlooked aspect of this dark chapter in American History. However, it should be noted that a highly specialized work of this nature would be most at home in equally specialized libraries, such as those that support museums, historical societies and academic institutions with curricula in archeology, American history and the like. For these niche markets, this two-volume set is highly recommended for purchase.—Michael F. Bemis, *Assistant Librarian, Washington City Library, Woodbury, Minnesota*