

## SOURCES

consumers.—*Carol Krismann, retired business librarian, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado*

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***Disasters and Tragic Events: An Encyclopedia of Catastrophes in American History.*** Ed. by Mitchell Newton-Matza. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2014. 2 vols. acid free \$189 (ISBN: 978-1-61069-165-9). E-book available (978-1-61069-166-6), call for pricing.

As this double volume set clearly shows, American history is much more than Presidential elections, momentous discoveries, and incredible inventions. It's also about ships sinking, epidemics, riots, and the ravages of Mother Nature. While unpleasant to contemplate, these are part of the life story of the United States; there are also lessons to be learned from the mistakes our forefathers made in reacting to these events.

Editor Newton-Matza (Ph.D., The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC) and his crew of contributors have done a commendable job in outlining some of the more notable grief-stricken occurrences of our national past. There were plenty more they could have chosen from, a fact he plainly points out in his preface in which he states that “as with the creation of any list, decisions had to be made with certain criteria...the attempt here is to examine a wide variety of events and understand why we still remember them” (xiv). Therefore, the researcher may find entries regarding a cross-section of both man-made debacles (“1692 Salem Witch Trials,” “1871 Great Chicago Fire,” “1929 Great Depression Begins”) and natural phenomena (“1811–1812 New Madrid, Missouri Earthquakes,” “1927 Mississippi River Flood”). As these representative articles suggest, the arrangement is chronological. A “List of Entries” appears in both volumes for easy browsing, while an ample index will assist those who know the name of a particular event, such as the *Hindenburg* airship explosion but not the year or place it occurred (in this case, 1937, at Lakehurst, New Jersey). Writing style is suitable for the intended audience of high school/undergraduate college students and the lay public. This set is well illustrated with black-and-white historic photographs, engravings, etc., and sidebar articles highlight tangential issues related to main entries. For example, “Labor Strife and Legal Issues” appears within the body of text for the “1894 Pullman Strike in Chicago, Illinois”. A total of 206 entries appear within these covers; the set concludes with a selection of primary documents relating to selected disasters and a lengthy bibliography of print and electronic resources for further study.

Well researched, well written, and well documented, this set is recommended for purchase by all public and academic libraries. This reviewer hastens to add, however, that a competing recent title is on par with the ABC-CLIO volumes and could either supplant or supplement the same. *Disasters, Accidents, and Crises in American History: A Reference Guide to the Nation's Most Catastrophic Events* (Ballard C. Campbell, ed., Facts on File, 2008) contains surprisingly little overlap; while limited to one volume, the articles are more concise, so

it contains about the same amount of material but on different topics. This title is likewise recommended for purchase.—*Michael F. Bemis, Independent Reference Book Reviewer*

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***Encyclopedia of American Recessions and Depressions.*** Ed. by Daniel J. Leab. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2014. 2 vols. acid free. \$189 (ISBN: 967-1-59884-945-5). E-book available (978-1-59884-946-2), call for pricing.

During the 1936 Democratic National Convention, President Franklin Roosevelt famously stated, “There is a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generations, much is given. Of other generations, much is expected.” The *Encyclopedia of American Recessions and Depressions* focuses primarily on the mysterious cycle of economic downturns throughout the history of the United States and on these generations of Americans where much was expected, specifically to help the country emerge from the economic abyss of their time.

The scope of this two-volume set is quite comprehensive. Fourteen of the most significant economic depressions and recessions are covered, spanning from the turbulent years shortly after the conclusion of the American Revolution up to the Great Recession of 2008–2009. Organized chronologically, each recession or depression is comprised of an in-depth essay written by an expert on the time period. In addition, there are numerous short form, traditional reference entries, spanning one to three pages in length, that expound on the significant people, events, issues, and legislation germane to each particular downturn. Peppered with eye-catching images of relevant documents and illustrations, each entry concludes with citations for further reading on the topic, which is always an appreciated feature.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of this encyclopedia is the collection of primary documents included in the appendix. At least one primary document is provided for each economic downturn, with the total number of primary documents contained exceeding one hundred. These kinds of primary sources, often coveted by history students in an academic setting, are highly effective in putting each major economic downturn into a cultural and societal context that makes an already strong reference source truly exceptional. This section of primary documents, combined with a lengthy bibliography of additional sources and alphabetical index of each entry, results in an appendix that is just as valuable as the information contained within each of the main entries.

Considering the far-reaching coverage of recessions and depressions and related topics contained within this set, as well as the exhaustive topical entries, primary documents, and selected bibliography, the *Encyclopedia of American Recessions and Depressions* becomes easy to recommend. This encyclopedia would be a welcome and valuable addition to any academic library.—*Matthew Laudicina, Reference and Instruction Librarian, Sojourner Truth Library, State University of New York at New Paltz.*