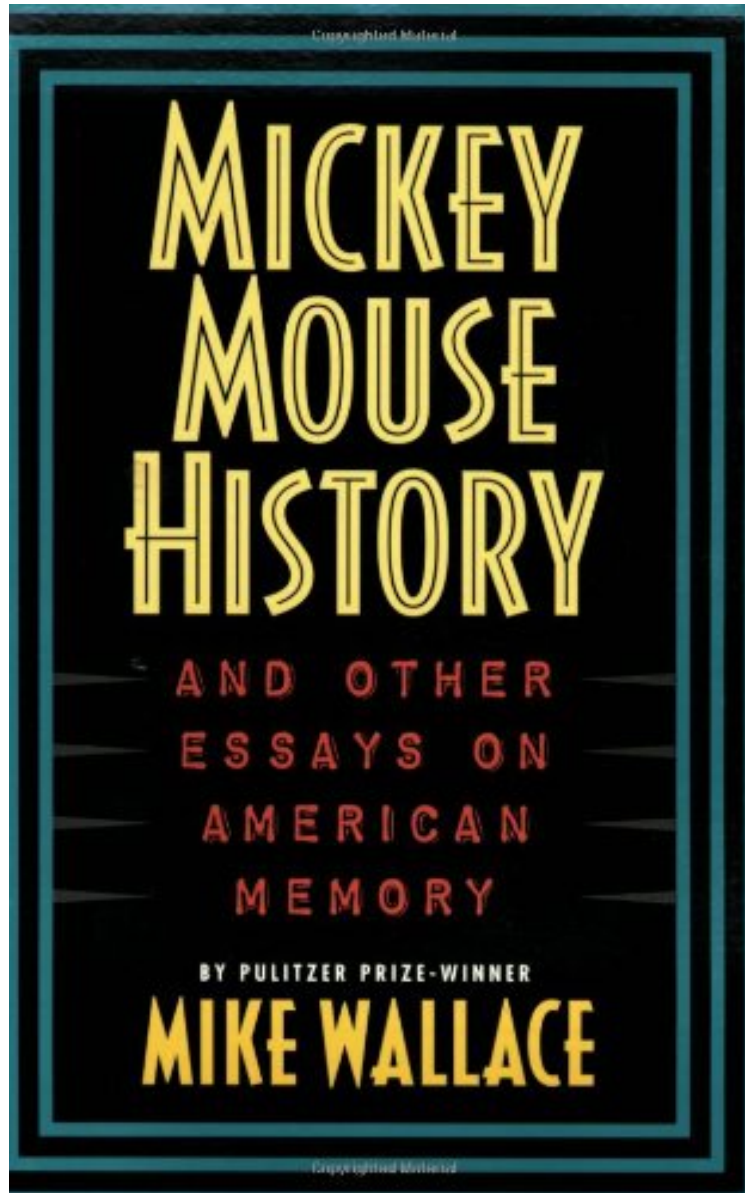


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Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory

Michael Wallace

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Michael Wallace : Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory:

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. schoolBy Randi Holtzi got it for school and found the readings dry and boring. however this class was an elective and i may have felt differently0 of 4 people found the following review

helpful. Mickey Mouse History By Richard Shoemaker This book was purchased as a textbook for a course I will be taking this fall. I will not be reading it until then. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Accessible and Thoughtful By D.K. P. Mike Wallace uses the kind of academic writing all scholars should aspire to achieve--lively, free of jargon, and entertaining. His subject, as suggested by the book's title, is history and the debates that surround its depictions. Wallace observes, astutely, that struggles over how to portray history reveals much about ourselves, our beliefs, and our agendas. Wallace repeatedly points out that history is never neutral, a point well worth reinforcing. My particular interest is Disney Studies, and Wallace has a section (actually two essays) devoted to Disney and its use of history. That's the focus of this review, although some of its points can be generalized to the book as a whole. The first essay concentrates on Disney's portrayals of history in its theme parks. It focuses on certain attractions, such as the Hall of Presidents and Carousel of Progress, and EPCOT. Wallace does not shy from criticizing Disney's use of history, referring to it as "Disney Realism." But he also does not simply dismiss the potential in integrating history, entertainment, and the kind of technological wizardry Disney is known for. The essay makes a serious case for reconsidering Disney and its techniques, seeing in Disney's depictions of history both the potential and the pitfalls. In his second essay, Wallace concentrates on the failed Disney's America theme park. The chapter provides background information on the proposed park, including the academic and public debates surrounding the project. But it's also a call to re-examine Disney's use of history. For Wallace, simply dismissing Disney as (public, corporate) historian is not an effective strategy. To do so ignores the issues Disney's America raised and the potential in combining entertainment and education to portray the past. Wallace's essays on Disney demonstrate several strengths. 1) They look critically at Disney's use of history as well as the (varied) critical reactions to Disney and "Disney history." 2) They encourage envisioning how the portrayals of the past might usefully employ entertainment techniques and strategies ("edutainment" without the pejorative). 3) They reinforce Wallace's call for critical presentations of the past that open history to even further investigation and discussion - a conversation rather than a static script. Generally, the book's approach requires a careful balance that addresses the challenges of depicting history, different approaches and responses, and critical self-consciousness. For the most part, the book succeeds although more on the public's response would have been welcomed. There is one aspect or element I feel is missing in "Mickey Mouse History" - the stronger development of the strategies Wallace supports. How could/should history be presented? That topic could be a book in itself, but it would have been useful to see greater engagement with, and even answers to, the larger questions the essays have raised.

Shows how popularized historical images and narratives deeply influence Americans' understanding of their collective past. This book observes that we are a people who think of ourselves as having shed the past but also tourists who are on a 'heritage binge,' flocking by the thousands to Ellis Island, Colonial Williamsburg, or the Vietnam Memorial

From Library Journal In essays that previously appeared in the *Radical History*, Wallace (history, CUNY) explores the purposes of museums, particularly as popular tourist attractions. He is concerned with what the people who started museums originally had in mind to attract poor people and immigrants, for example, in the large urban technology museums and the early, mostly rural reconstructions such as Colonial Williamsburg. In his later chapters, Wallace deals with recent controversies such as the Enola Gay exhibit and Disney's America. He writes from a radical viewpoint in proposing the necessity of bringing people of color into museums; this is usually worn lightly but can become didactic. His style is lively and his musings productive, but the book's ideological focus (and, for the cloth edition, bloated price) make it a purchase only for libraries collecting heavily in curatorship or local history. Fritz Alan Buckallew, Univ. of Central Oklahoma Lib., Edmond Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. Mickey Mouse History probes into the struggles over public memory and the trivialization of history that pervades American culture. The recent imbroglio surrounding the National Air and Space Museum's proposed Enola Gay exhibit was reported as centering on why the U. S. government decided to use the A-bomb against Japan. Mike Wallace scrutinizes the actual development of the exhibit and investigates the ways in which controversy drew in historians, veterans, the media and the general public. Whether his subject is multimillion-dollar theme parks owned by powerful corporations, urban museums, or television docudramas, Wallace shows how depictions of history are shaped by assumptions about which pasts are worth saving, whose stories are worth telling, what gets left, and who decides. Mickey Mouse History is emphatically recommended for anyone with an interest in how history gets written and transmitted to the general populace, the politics of history, and how contemporary events shape historical perceptions -- and how historical perceptions shaped contemporary events! -- Midwest Book From the Publisher A long-awaited dispatch from the history front in today's culture war Historic Preservation Book Prize, The Center for Historic Preservation at Mary Washington College