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2009 Holiday Gift Guide



CHRISTMAS BOOK REVIEWS

AMERICA'S UNKNOWN 'GREATEST TRAITOR'?

An Artist in Treason:

The Extraordinary Double Life of Gen. James Wilkinson

By John Tiffany

You've heard of modern traitor Jonathon Pollard, and of course everyone has heard, in history, of Benedict Arnold, whose name has become a synonym for treachery, and Aaron Burr, the so-called "traitor" who came within an ace of being elected the third president of the republic (he tied in the vote with Jefferson). Burr, perhaps the most misunderstood man in American history, is worth a story in himself. Andro Linklater in his new book *An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson* has some interesting side remarks about him, and his mysterious duel with Alexander Hamilton.

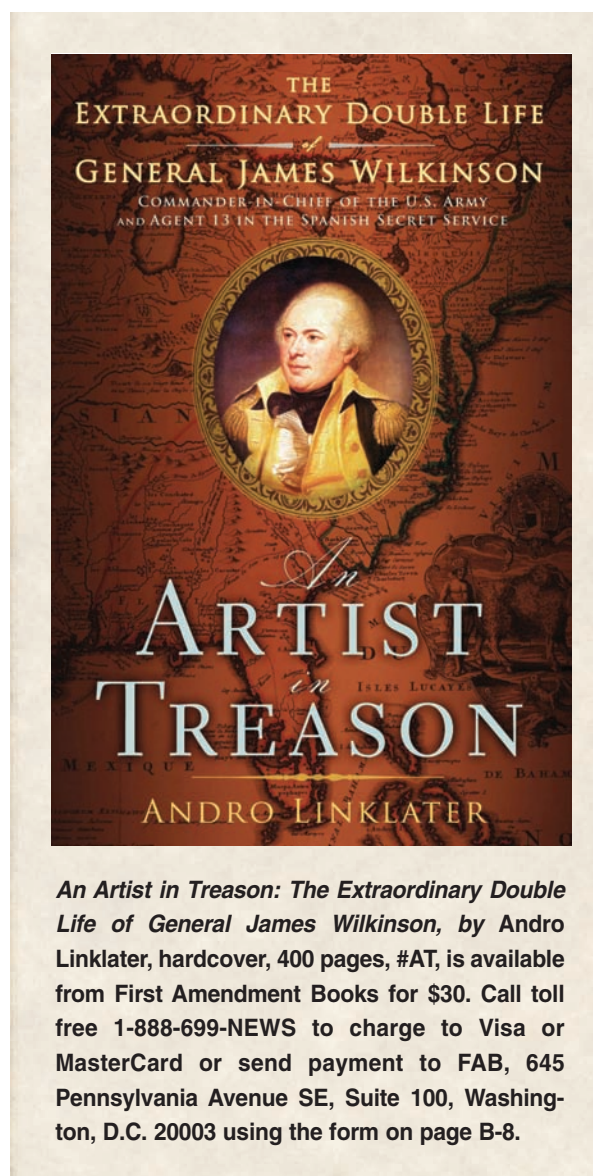
But relatively few know the story of one of America's greatest villains, Gen. James Wilkinson. Probably the reason we remember Burr as some sort of traitor and forget about Wilkinson is that Wilkinson was very active in defending his reputation, while Burr failed to take such action, a failure that he regretted in later years.

While pretending to be loyal to the United States, Wilkinson was semi-secretly working for the kingdom of Spain. Born in 1757 in Maryland, he lived until 1825 and was much involved in efforts to not only achieve Kentucky statehood, independent of Virginia, which once owned it, but to perhaps make Kentucky independent of the United States, and possibly to join it with the Spanish empire, which at that time adjoined the area.

Rather reminiscent of the fictional 007, the Spaniards knew him as "Agent 13."

Benedict Arnold went from being a great American hero to a traitor. The ebullient Wilkinson, or Wilky as some called him, a fellow veteran of the Revolutionary War, went from being a double agent to an American hero.

Having it both ways, this complex, ambitious man rose to the top even as he cheated and probably embezzled freely. He was suspected of being a member of the "Conway cabal," a plot to overthrow Gen. George



Washington and install Horatio Gates as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, but such suspicions did not stop him from enjoying a remarkable degree of confidence from his superiors. Yet he fell out of favor with both Arnold and Gates, and reportedly was challenged by Gates to a duel.

According to a new book that explores his continent-

sweeping saga in depth, *An Artist in Treason*, by Andro Linklater, Wilky was indeed quite a charmer. His personal magnetism was a key factor in his remarkably successful life. He more or less openly declared his loyalty to the Spanish empire, yet he was allowed to be the governor of the territory of Louisiana, and even rose through the military ranks to become the chief commander of the U.S. Army. At which point, having achieved his ambitions, he decided he did not need the Spaniards anymore, and would have nothing at all further to do with them.

It was said of him by wags that he never won a battle but never lost an inquiry, although multiple probes were launched to investigate his shady dealings with an empire that was more or less hostile to the United States.

Besides a court-martial for his failure on the Canadian frontier, which was the third military tribunal he had faced, he had been subjected to four congressional investigations into allegations of misdeeds, and two more, unofficial, trawls through his past.

Wilkinson was one of Burr's most important fellow travelers. Though it was discovered that his involvement in the conspiracy was most likely a bid to further his own personal and political goals, he worked closely with Burr to develop a plan of action. One related scheme was to separate Kentucky (and Tennessee, and perhaps all the states and territories west of the Appalachians) from the union. These "Westerners" felt oppressed by the East Coast states, and they wanted to at least cooperate with Spain, which controlled, at the time, the entire Far West up to Canada, as well as the all-important Mississippi River.

The rich silver of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas in Mexico was also a significant factor in the politics of the West, although this reviewer wishes the author would have written more about that aspect.

In 400 pages, Andro Linklater spins the saga of the charismatic and exuberant general. The fact is that the general's sinuous morality made him the ideal candidate to handle the dirty, and deniable, work that an upright president like Jefferson needed done without



GEN. JAMES WILKINSON
Was he America's worst traitor?

knowing how it was done, such as, for example, spying out whether Capt. Gen. Someruelos might be ready to take Cuba out of the Spanish empire.

Wilkinson was known for his corrupt practices. His then-friend Aaron Burr (later to be his enemy) persuaded President Thomas Jefferson to appoint him as governor of the Louisiana Territory. Later Wilkinson would deny being part of Burr's "conspiracy," if it can be so called, and "revealed Burr's plot" to Jefferson.

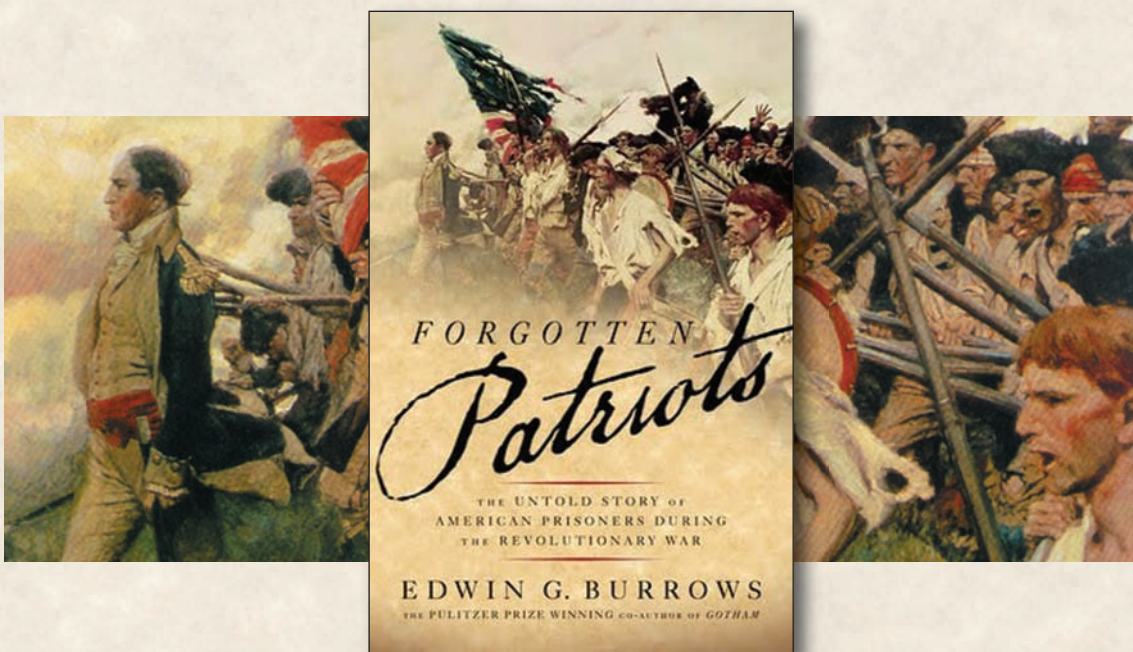
Actually, in hindsight, if Kentucky, and maybe the West in general, had seceded from the union, it might have been a good thing. We'd have had none of the wars we later had, and there might not be an IRS or any of the other Big Brother trappings of today.

Spain at one time was forbidding foreigners, in particular Americans, from trading down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Wilkinson sought to use his undeniable charm and some suitable bribes to convince the Spanish officials to let him have a lucrative monopoly on the trade with the United States. His greatest fear, for a time, was that the Spaniards would fail to enforce the ban on trading by other Americans.

Wilkinson certainly had his defenders, prime among them being himself. He published his *Memoirs* in 1817, and it created an immediate impact. An author's tour was organized, with Wilkinson as guest of honor at numerous political banquets and introduced as "the meritorious persecuted veteran." Yet, for all his ambition and Machiavellian maneuverings, he was often short of funds.

Not just a scoundrel, Wilkinson does deserve credit for his positive accomplishments, such as opening up the Mississippi to American settlers, and keeping the Army subject to civilian control. The saga of Wilkinson is a sweeping and surprising one, and yet it covers parts of American history that are generally little known by most history buffs. ★

John Tiffany is a longtime freelance book reviewer. He is the copy editor for AMERICAN FREE PRESS and the assistant editor for The Barnes Review revisionist history magazine.

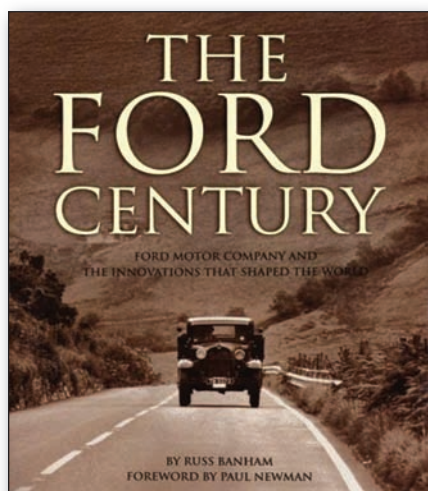


FORGOTTEN PATRIOTS

THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICAN PRISONERS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Between 1775 and 1783, some 200,000 Americans took up arms against the British crown. Just over 6,800 of those men died in battle. About 25,000 became prisoners of war, most of them confined in New York City under conditions so atrocious that they perished by the thousands. Evidence suggests that at least 17,500 Americans may have died in these prisons—more than twice the number to die on the battlefield. It was in New York, not Boston or Philadelphia, where most Americans gave their lives for the cause of independence. In *Forgotten Patriots*, Edwin G. Burrows, Pulitzer Prize-winning co-author of *Gotham*, tells the forgotten story of New York's British prison camps and the thousands of patriots who lost their lives there. Despite the extraordinary number of lives lost, *Forgotten Patriots* is the first-ever account of what took place in these hellholes. New York City became the jailhouse of the American Revolution because it was the principal base of the crown's military operations. Beginning with the bumper crop of American captives taken during the 1776 invasion of New York, captured Americans were stuffed into a hastily assembled collection of public buildings, prison ships, and other structures—most notorious among them the infamous "Old Sugar House," a place whose squalor became legend. Wherever they were held, prisoners were shockingly overcrowded and chronically underfed. Those who escaped alive told of comrades so hungry they ate their own clothes and shoes. Beyond telling the story of the prison camps themselves, Burrows asks why this horrific episode was virtually lost to history until now. Historians, he contends, have been too quick to dismiss a number of prominent witnesses (Ethan Allen, for example) as propagandists who exaggerated conditions in the prisons to inflame public opinion against the British (although their reports did convince many Americans that reconciliation with Britain was impossible, and may very well have prolonged the war). He explores the reasons for the mistreatment of the prisoners, which he attributes not to cruel intent but to such equally odious factors as obstinacy, condescension, corruption, and indifference. And he asks whether or not the Americans treated their enemy prisoners any better. While circumstances were such that their capacity for gross inhumanity was never tested, Burrows holds that Washington—unlike his British and Hessian counterparts—always insisted on the importance of handling enemy prisoners as humanely as possible. As moving as it is shocking, *Forgotten Patriots* offers a unique perspective on the Revolutionary War as well as a sobering commentary on how Americans have remembered our struggle for independence—and how much we have forgotten. Hardback, 364 pages. #PAT, \$32. Just \$28 for AFPRC members.

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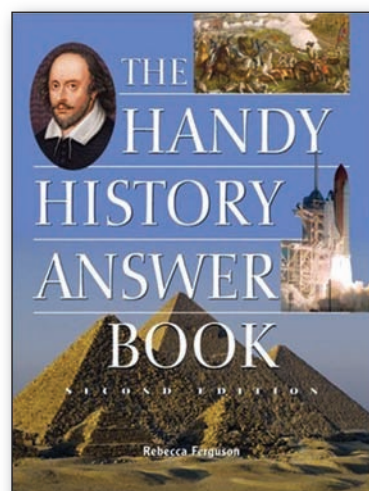


THE FORD CENTURY: INNOVATIONS THAT SHAPED THE WORLD

Historians, engineers, friends and foes have penned many books about Henry Ford's life and work—not counting all the books about the cars. But here is one that covers it all in words and pictures. This high-quality coffee-table history book contains over 500 photos. It is hefty but not massive, easy to read and well designed. Russ Banham divides the Ford story into four topical chapters: an overview, risks, innovations, and efforts to improve the world. The Ford Motor Company changed the world. *The Ford Century* is an amazing overview of an engaging corporate story and the love affair American consumers had with not only Ford automobiles, but also Henry Ford himself. Hardcover, 272 pages, #FORD, \$45. Just \$40 for AFPRC members.

THE HANDY HISTORY ANSWER BOOK

Second edition. By Rebecca Nelson Ferguson. Here's a comprehensive fingertip guide through the pages of history. Beginning with a section on historical eras, this ever popular reference source tracks history with obsessive zeal and tight editing. *The Handy History Answer Book* organizes information in 13 specific subject sections ranging from politics to war to science to religion. It tackles exploration and settlement, technological advances, financial and business events, social movements, natural and man-made disasters, medicine and disease, art and culture. 125 illustrations, timelines. Softcover, 640 pages, #HH, \$22.

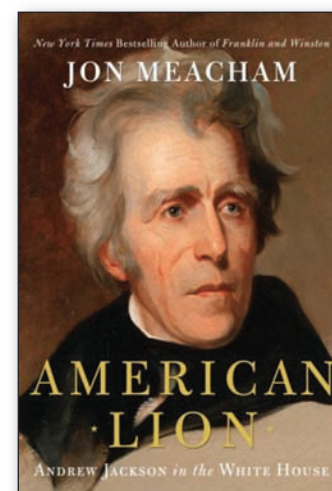
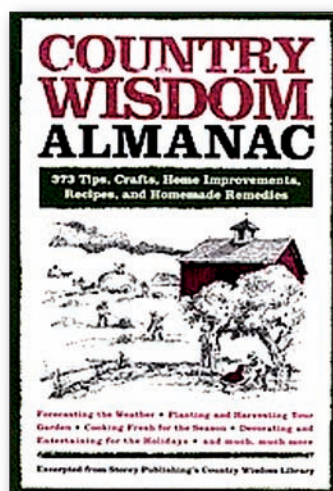


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ANDREW JACKSON: AMERICAN LION

Author John Meacham takes you inside the Jackson White House for a personalized glimpse of what really happened during his presidency. Jackson lived in rugged times. Even in D.C., personal slights ended in duels. Members of his own cabinet nearly came to blows over a woman's reputation. And to make matters worse for the widower Jackson, there were parties to be thrown and details, details, details. For logistical support he turned to his son and daughter-in-law, who acted as personal secretary and "First Lady," respectively. Think Old Hickory could control them? Guess again. Hardcover, 483 pages, #AJ, \$35. Just \$30 for AFPRC members.

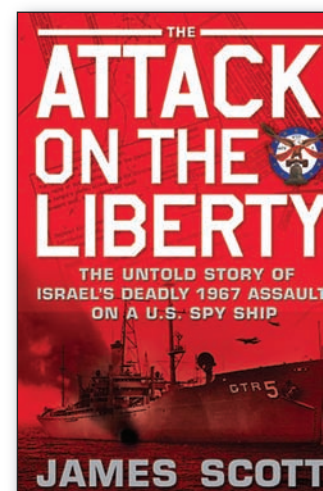


ATTACK ON THE LIBERTY: THE UNTOLD STORY

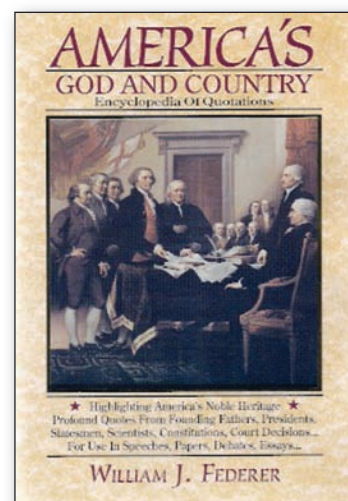
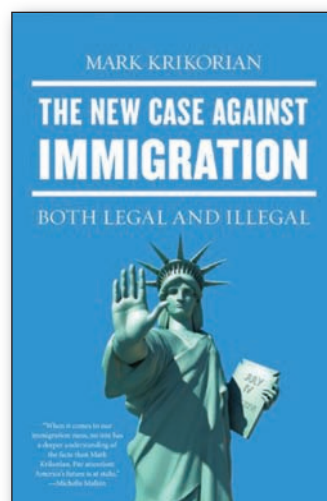
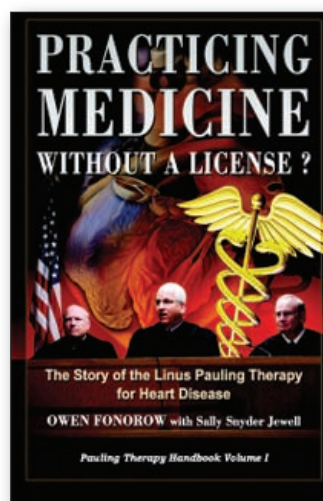
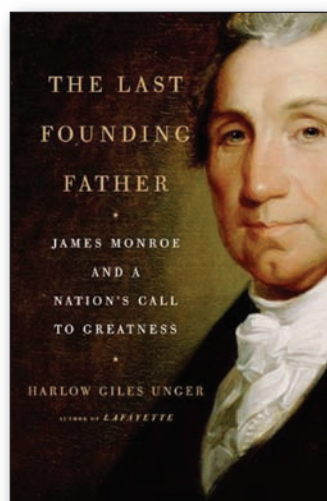
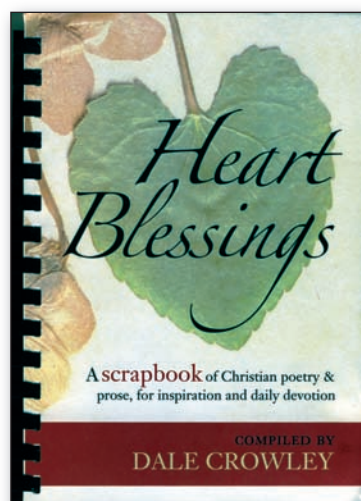
James Scott is a journalist and the son of a surviving *USS Liberty* officer. In this riveting book, he recounts the story of the horrifying attack and the tremendous impact it had on the lives of the crew. He puts the attack in context, showing how political considerations trumped the demands for justice from the survivors and their supporters in the military and in Congress. Drawing on new interviews and recently declassified documents, he demonstrates that Israel's initial insistence that the attack was a mistake caused by misidentification of the ship is implausible. His descriptions of the crew under fire and their frantic work to save the ship are unforgettable. Scott takes readers into the White House where senior officials devised a plan to protect Israel from public outrage. Hardcover, 384 pages, #LLB, \$30. Just \$27 for AFPRC members.

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Radio minister Dale Crowley Jr.'s father, also a well-known Christian evangelist, compiled this amazing and inspirational collection of 1,000 Christian poems back in the 1970s. Now he has brought this gem back into print in a new easy-to-read edition. Dale's dad spent a lifetime assembling the best Christian poetry he could find—and organized it into 35 different categories including: courage; prayer, praise, personality, humor, Easter, Mother's Day, Christmas and more. Softcover, combbound for quick reference, 343 pages, #H, \$18.



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THE LAST FOUNDING FATHER JAMES MONROE AND A NATION'S CALL TO GREATNESS

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THE NEW CASE AGAINST IMMIGRATION BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL

Imigrants are coming to a very different America—one where changes in the economy, society and government create fundamentally different incentives for newcomers. In other words, the America that many of our grandparents came to no longer exists. And this simple fact must become the new starting point for the explosive debate about immigration policy. Author Mark Krikorian argues that although mass immigration once served our national interests, in today's America it weakens our common national identity, limits opportunities for upward mobility, threatens our security and sovereignty and strains resources for social programs. Hard-back, 294 pages, #IM, \$30. Just \$26 for members of the AFPRC.

AMERICA'S GOD & COUNTRY ENCYCLOPEDIA OF QUOTATIONS

Any objective observer will come away from this book thoroughly convinced that the founders of the United States viewed this nation as being created by the Providence of God for His purposes. The 2,100 quotes from 700 sources overwhelmingly verify this common theme from myriad thinkers. America's leaders prayed, they listened to God, and they followed up accordingly. They established a "Christian nation" which they identified as such in repeated cases. The editor, William J. Federer, has done an outstanding job of compiling centuries of quotes into one volume. The sections on Columbus and Washington are lengthy, but well worth reading. New hard-back edition, 741 pages, #GC, \$30. Just \$25 for AFPRC members.

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What Every American Should Know About the Mideast—softcover, 493 pages, #ME, \$20.

Who's Really Running AMERICA?

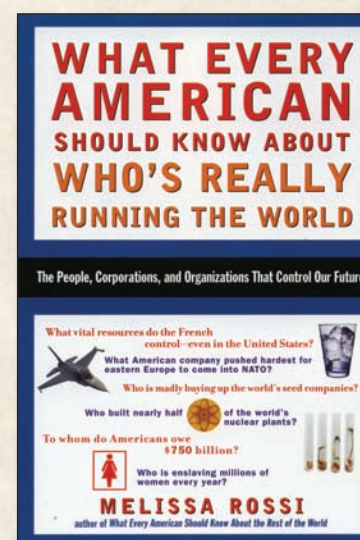
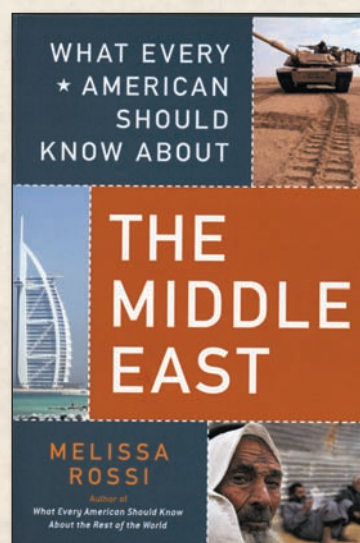
Bestselling author Melissa Rossi's lively and accessible *What Every American Should Know* series is a shocking primer on world affairs, bringing us up to speed on what's happening at home and abroad. In the latest installment, *What Every American Should Know About Who's Really Running America*, Rossi makes sense of what went wrong with U.S. politics, detailing how the political system has been hijacked and driven over the cliff—and taking a close look at exactly who wrestled away the steering wheel and how they did it. Here are some of the book's highlights: Who's pushing the "nuclear renaissance" policy? Are U.S. immigration laws strangling the economy? Which youth group spawned many of today's power elite? Who's telling the school board what to teach our kids? What tactics do lobbyists employ to force their agenda? Why people need to send a message to lawmakers—NOW. Much, much more!

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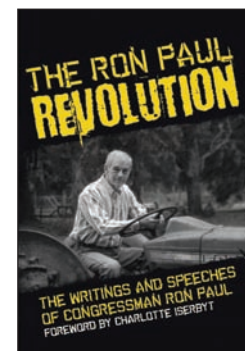
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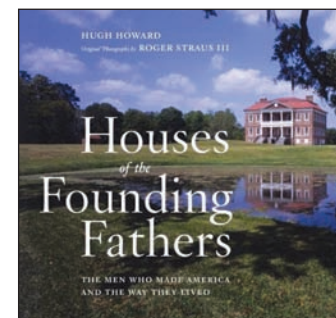
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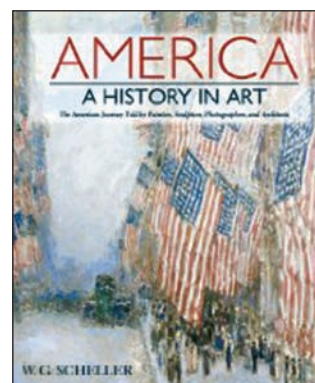
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