Sources
Reference Books

Anita J. Slack, Editor

The American Flag: An Encyclopedia of the Stars and Stripes in U.S. History, Culture, and Law. By John R. Vile. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018. 440 p. Acid-free $94.00 (ISBN 978-1-4408-5788-1). E-book Available (978-1-4408-5789-8), call for pricing.

The average American displays the national banner every Fourth of July, shows respect by placing his or her hand over their hearts when it passes by in a parade, and (those of us of a certain age, anyway) remembers facing the starry standard in grade school while reciting the pledge of allegiance. Ask these same average Americans how much they actually *know* about Old Glory, however, and it may become apparent that the answer is "not much." Therein lies the need for the present volume under examination.

Both patriotic primer and ready reference work, this volume's first ninety pages consists of a series of overview essays covering such topics as flag etiquette, our flag's history, its design and creation, and how the United States ensign has influenced American art, music, journalism, and politics. The bulk of the book are the approximately two hundred alphabetically arranged entries, covering such diverse fields as art and artists ("Hassam, [Frederick] Childe," "*Spirit of '76*"); causes, events, and organizations ("Flag Manufacturers Association of America," "Suffragists and the U.S. Flag"); design and construction ("Colors of the Flag," "Stars, Arrangement of on U.S. Flags); famous flags ("Betsy Ross Flag," "Fort Sumpter Flag"); and a plethora of other topics, including songs, poems, and court cases. These encyclopedic articles are uniformly well written and researched, are cross-referenced, and conclude with a brief list of further reading suggestions. Black-and-white illustrations, while not numerous, nevertheless contribute to readers' comprehension of the material presented. Special features include a timeline of important dates and events in the history of our nation's flag, a glossary of vexillological terms, and an ample bibliography.

Author John Vile is a professor of political science and dean of the University Honors College at Middle Tennessee State University. Among his previously published reference works are *The Encyclopedia of Constitutional Amendments, Proposed Amendments, and Amending Issues, 1789–2015* (now in its fourth edition) and four volumes of the Documents Decoded series (all published by ABC-CLIO). He has been ably assisted in this most recent effort by a team of eight contributors, all holding advanced degrees and affiliated with institutions of higher learning.

A literature search strongly suggests that this title is a unique reference work. While many print and digital narrative resources concerning the American flag have been published over the years, this apparently is the first, and so far only, collection of factual material presented as discrete nuggets of information, from "Advertising" to "Zaricor Flag Collection." Considering the book's broad based appeal and its success in filling a gap in the reference literature, this volume is strongly recommended for purchase by all public and academic libraries.—*Michael F. Bemis, Retired Reference Library, Independent Scholar, Oakdale, Minnesota*