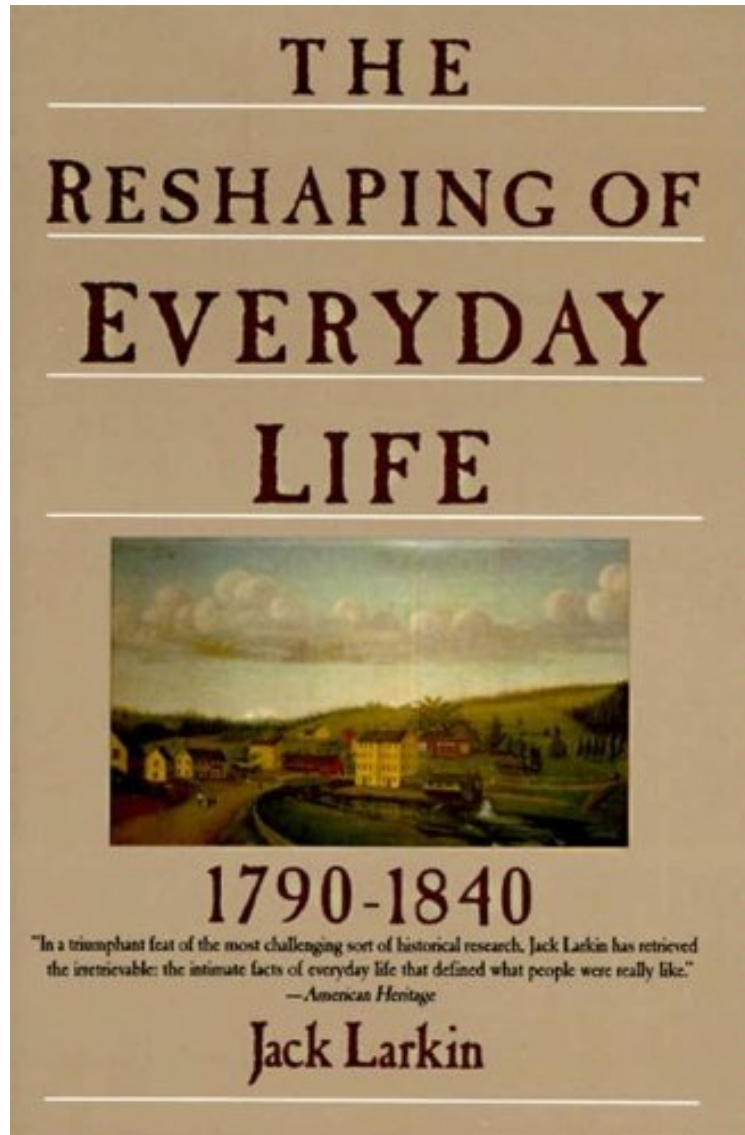


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## The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840 (Everyday Life in America)

Von Jack Larkin

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**Von Jack Larkin : The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840 (Everyday Life in America)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840 (Everyday Life in America):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Touring the Homely Side of America's PastVon Connie BooneI wish I could give this book six stars. The Reshaping of

Everyday Life took me on a delightful tour of America during its infancy and provided the sights, sounds and smells of yesterday. Each chapter unraveled the tightly wrapped threads of legend and myth that has muddied my view of our past to reveal the rich and varied layers which amazed, amused and amended my hindsight. Since ordinary folk, doing their humdrum tasks, are both the audience and the participants in historic drama, I want to understand their ways and Reshaping has certainly helped in this quest. In this book, Jack Larkin has given me the details that will paint the scenery and add depth to my future explorations of the time period. Now when I think of Andrew Jackson, I can visualize the homes where his constituents lived and the games they liked to play and the places where they shopped. When I read about the great western migration that began in 1837, I can see the clothing the immigrants wore, the titles of the books they packed and the music that followed them west. Jack Larkin accomplished this visual rendering of yesterday with a smooth writing style that never breaks an even and easy stride. "By the late 1830s cookstoves were coming into use among middling city families and in Northern commercial villages. In 1838, 'the year we had a new cooking stove, the first one in town,' recalled Susan Blunt, who grew up in a bustling rural commercial center, 'the neighbors said we would all be sick-taken off in rimmers as they called them.' In addition, the book offered many surprises that added new insight to time and place. "Phineas T. Barnum of Bethel, Connecticut, whose father was a middling farmer and tavern keeper, remembered that in the 1820s he and his brother customarily slept three in a bed with the Irishman who labored on his family farm." This kind of nugget adds texture to reading any history book. Whether I am reading a biography of Jackson or a book on the opening of the Erie Canal, I consider this book a handy reference tool. However, the book stands alone as a fun read for anyone including the casual history buff or students who are tired of cramming bare names, disconnected dates and dreary military battles into their heads. I have recommended it to a high school junior, an elderly uncle, and a history teacher. All enjoyed it immensely. It is my favorite in the series of six entries from Harper Perennial.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.

### Shaping Our America

Von Matthew Getty

The period of 1790-1840 was a time of maturation and growth for the new nation. It was an era of transition from revolutionary times to adulthood. This time saw a change in many social customs and regional ways of life. In 1790, America was a relatively small country which was mostly confined to the portion east of the Appalachians. Kentucky was the frontier. Agriculture was the occupation for most families and was done on a subsistence basis. Each farmer produced a little bit of everything that his family would need to survive. Homes were being carved out of the wilderness, and for the average family, survival was a struggle. Large families were the norm, as children were an asset to the farm. Many houses were little more than shacks. They provided little or no privacy. Travel was very slow and dangerous, and social visits were closely tied to economic negotiations. Barn and house raisings, along with haying and corn husking, were times for families to socialize, but also times to get things done. By 1840, many things had changed. The frontier was pushing westward. The people were spreading out, but at the same time growing closer together. The development of the railroad, steam boats, and canal system greatly sped up travel, although they did not necessarily make it any safer. These innovations drew the nation together and encouraged regional specialization. This was also a period of rapid industrialization. The manufacture of textiles was being consolidated under one roof and women were leaving home to work in the mills. Combined with better transportation, industrialization marked the beginning of the end for subsistence farming. Products could now be sold for profit. Family sizes began to decrease as women married at a later age and lengthened the period between births. The standard of living increased and more people had larger houses. Houses had more rooms and these rooms were arranged in such a way as to emphasize privacy. Social activity also began to separate itself from economic interests. Farmers looked more closely after their money and profit. While barn and house raisings were still necessary, the party atmosphere that surrounded them began to disappear. Corn huskings were looked upon as wasteful and they also disappeared. Geographically, the nation was separated into three regions. In the North, mainly New England, the people were known for their austere personalities. The region had poor soil compared to the "old northwest" and became primarily a dairy producer. On the western frontier the people generally lived in poverty and were more open in manner and expression of character. In the South, the people were known for being both gentlemanly and brutal. Plantation owners were a throwback to European aristocracy. They were still able to own slaves but could not import them. A work day on such a plantation would involve watching the slaves from dawn to dusk rather than directly participating in the farming. Southerners were known for horse racing, fighting, dueling, cockfighting, bull bating and other such violent pastimes. These practices were not unheard of elsewhere but died hard in the South. Larkin used a variety of sources in compiling this history. He began with an extensive list of secondary sources that gave him the broad foundation and understanding of the period. More importantly, however, he consulted a vast group of primary sources. The real meat and support for his work comes from journals, letters, and town histories. The unfortunate drawback to this is that we are not all prolific journal writers. This means that Larkin came across a handful of people whom he referenced repeatedly throughout the work. On one hand this method provides some continuity and structure for the book, but on the other hand it causes a little tedium as the reader sees the same names being drawn upon over and over. It is generally difficult to grasp the existence that most of the nation experienced. We look at the houses from that period and think that it couldn't have been all that bad. The truth is that the houses and other remnants of the common man's life have mostly disappeared. Only the best survived. Very little comparison can be made between that

time period and our own. Two things are similar: New Englanders are still austere and the times are still changing. The industrial revolution of the early 1800s can be compared to the technological and communications revolution of the late twentieth century. The industrial revolution caused an enormous amount of change during the nineteenth century. The American people were drawn closer together by improvements in transportation. They were also tied together by commerce. Industry provided certain goods at lower prices and took some work away from the farms. Regional specialization led to co-dependency. This revolution was completed this century. We now live in an instantaneous world where even the fast and efficient postal system is not fast enough. Computers and airlines can take us anywhere and bring us anything we want with relative immediacy. These changes have caused as much change in our time as the industrial revolution did in theirs. Social reforms have greatly improved working conditions in factories and increased the standard of living. A vast middle class has been created. Family sizes have dropped as social, economic, and scientific conditions and advancements have conspired against them. Our sense of community has also decreased as we are far less dependent on each other and the family unit is spread out. Americans are less tied to their work and are very happy to break away to celebrate holidays. Education has not only improved, but it has become a necessity to survive in today's world. Jack Larkin not only gives us a good glimpse of the past, but he helps us appreciate the present.

Kurzbeschreibung "Compact and insightful. "--New York Times Book "Jack Larkin has retrieved the irretrievable; the intimate facts of everyday life that defined what people were really like."--American Heritage Pressestimmen "Virtually all human activity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries comes in for scrutiny in this compact and insightful book."--New York Times Book "Kurzbeschreibung" Compact and insightful. "--New York Times Book "Jack Larkin has retrieved the irretrievable; the intimate facts of everyday life that defined what people were really like."--American Heritage