

We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration

Jeffrey Lee Meriwether

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We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration Jeffrey Lee Meriwether Commemorative practices are revised and rebuilt based on the spirit of the time in which they are re/created. Historians sometimes imagine that commemoration captures history, but actually commemoration creates new narratives about history that allow people to interact with the past in a way that they find meaningful. As our social values change (race, gender, religion, sexuality, class), our commemorations do, too. We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration, analyzes current trends in the study of historical memory that are particularly relevant to our own present - our biases, our politics, our contextual moment - and strive to name forgotten, overlooked, and denied pasts in traditional histories. Race, gender, and sexuality, for example, raise questions about our most treasured myths: where were the slaves at Jamestowne? How do women or lesbians protect and preserve their own histories, when no one else wants to write them? Our current social climate allows us to question authority, and especially the authoritative definitions of nation, patriotism, and heroism, and belonging. How do we un-commemorate things that were mis-commemorated in the past? How do we repair the damage done by past commemorations? The chapters in this book, contributed by eighteen emerging and established scholars, examine these modern questions that entirely reimagine the landscape of commemoration as it has been practiced, and studied, before.

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Francis Knapp:

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