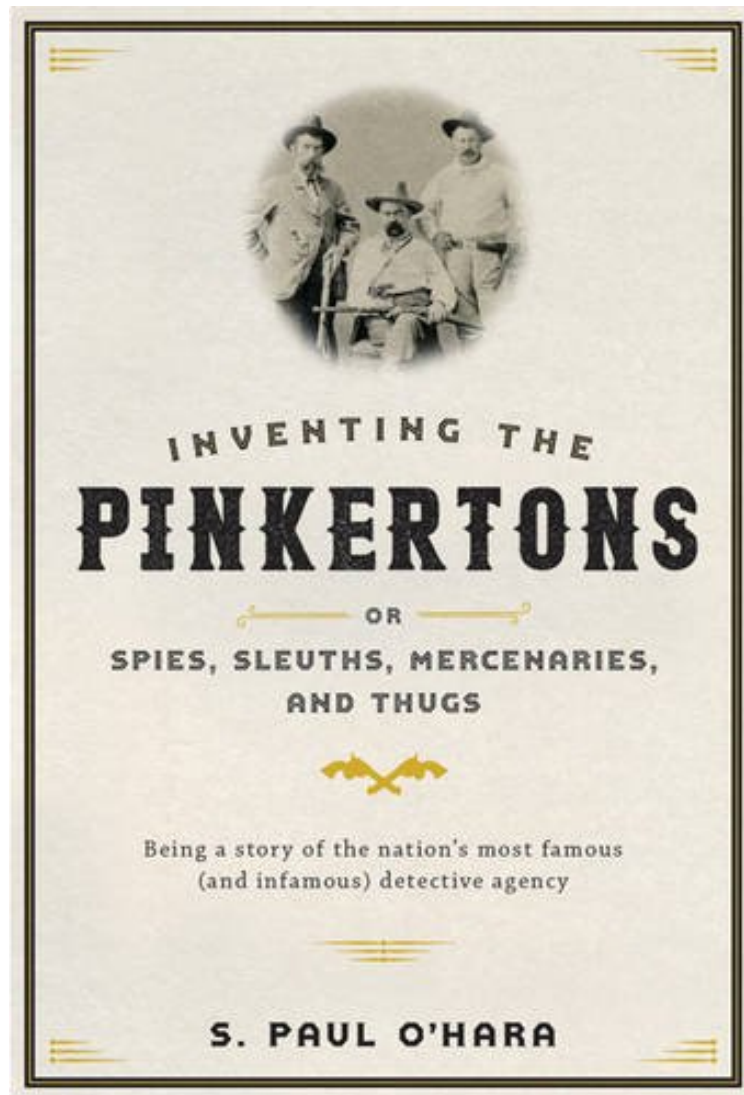


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Inventing the Pinkertons; or, Spies, Sleuths, Mercenaries, and Thugs: Being a story of the nations most famous (and infamous) detective agency

S. Paul O'Hara

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Written by a history professor, this book is not as dry as one would expect. Deftly woven is the role of popular crime fiction from the works of Edgar Allen Poe through Dashiell Hammett into the story of the Pinkertons through Blackwater, that it becomes apparent how Allen Pinkerton's savvy exploitation of popular culture contributed to his financial success and infamy as he created, and solved, the problems worrisome to the Gilded Age industrialists. There are a lot of dates, places, and names as it is a history book. If you're a student of the times, this book should be in your library.
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This book provides a serious look at one of the most sinister organizations in American history. Today the Pinkerton Detective agency, like its rival, the Burns Detective Agency, has been absorbed, by Securitas, a Swedish company. During its early days, the "Pinkertons" were involved in strike-busting and other activities for their employers, the robber barons of the Nineteenth Century. Not many Americans know much about the early history of what appears today to be a respectable business.
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Thoroughly researched! Serious, and at the same time entertaining! Fills in some answers about the detectives who frequently show up in popular stories and movies.

Between 1865 and 1937, Pinkertons National Detective Agency was at the center of countless conflicts between capital and labor, bandits and railroads, and strikers and state power. Some believed that the detectives were protecting society from dangerous criminal conspiracies; others thought that armed Pinkertons were capitals tool to crush worker dissent. Yet the image of the Pinkerton detective also inspired romantic and sensationalist novels, reflected shifting ideals of Victorian manhood, and embodied a particular kind of rough frontier justice. *Inventing the Pinkertons* examines the evolution of the agency as a pivotal institution in the cultural history of American monopoly capitalism. Historian S. Paul OHara intertwines political, social, and cultural history to reveal how Scottish-born founder Allan Pinkerton insinuated his way to power and influence as a purveyor of valuable (and often wildly wrong) intelligence in the Union cause. During Reconstruction, Pinkerton turned his agents into icons of law and order in the Wild West. Finally, he transformed his firm into a for-rent private army in the war of industry against labor. Having begun life as peddlers of information and guardians of mail bags, the Pinkertons became armed mercenaries, protecting scabs and corporate property from angry strikers. OHara argues that American capitalists used the Pinkertons to enforce new structures of economic and political order. Yet the infamy of the Pinkerton agent also gave critics and working communities a villain against which to frame their resistance to the new industrial order. Ultimately, *Inventing the Pinkertons* is a gripping look at how the histories of American capitalism, industrial folklore, and the nation-state converged.

"For fans of the American West as well as true crime buffs." (Library Journal)"This detailed, fascinating book taps into the emerging popular culture focusing on the detective story to examine the transformation of the Pinkerton Agency from a Civil War spy operation into a professional detective agency and finally into a private strikebreaking army. O'Hara tells an important and interesting story." (Phillip G. Payne, St. Bonaventure University, author of *Crash! How the Economic Boom and Bust of the 1920s Worked*)"This fine study not only tells the convoluted tale of the notorious Pinkerton Agency but also seats it in the context of a rapidly-changing American culture. As a read it rivals the best detective novel." (Maury Klein, Professor Emeritus, University of Rhode Island)
About the Author
S. Paul OHara is an associate professor of history at Xavier University. He is the author of *Gary: The Most American of All American Cities*.