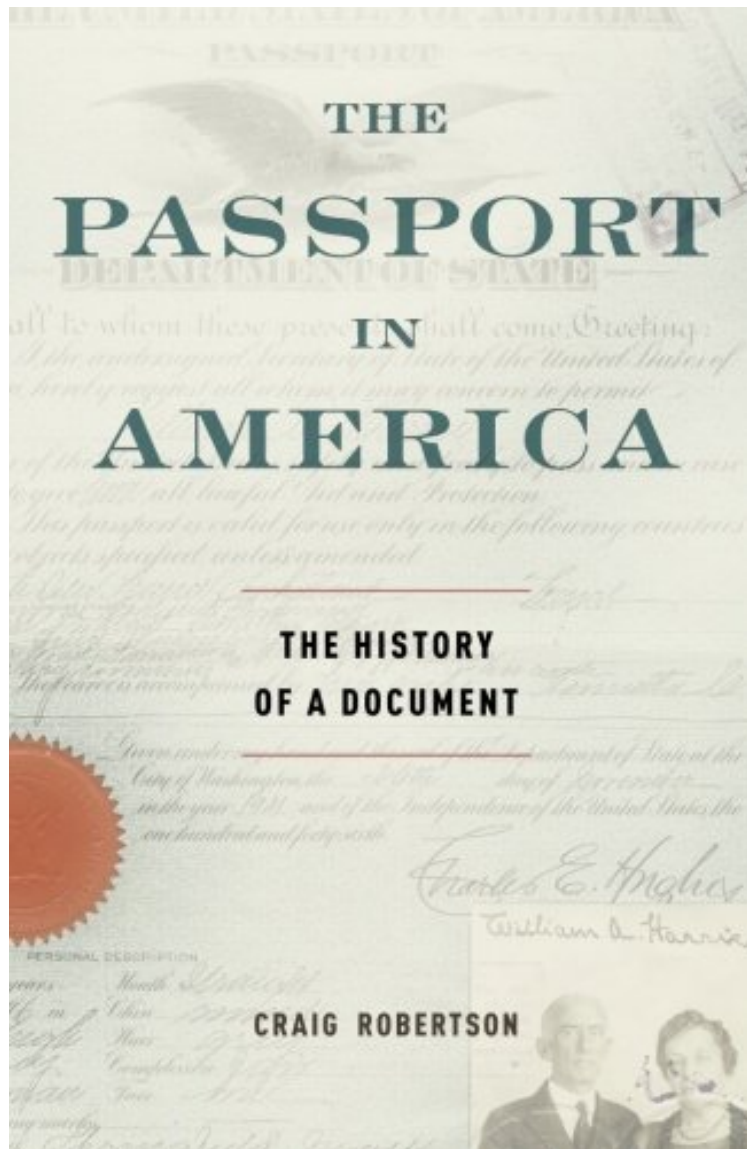


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## The Passport in America: The History of a Document

*Craig Robertson*

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#2451311 in Books Oxford University Press, USA 2012-10-02 2012-10-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 6.10 x .80 x 9.20l, 1.10 #File Name: 019992757X352 pages | File size: 78.Mb

**Craig Robertson : The Passport in America: The History of a Document** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Passport in America: The History of a Document:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Kind of a slog but still a fascinating subject By J. Tant Bought the Kindle version...publisher, thanks for supporting Kindle! I'm still about halfway through this. It's a slow read and not a very sexy topic, but it's still interesting. For example, I hadn't known that even up until relatively recently, women didn't usually have individual passports. Instead there was a kind of family passport with a group photo (why would a

respectable woman be traveling without her husband...?). Even the idea of a passport being evidence of identity is a fairly new concept. Then there is some discussion of class, with the upper classes viewing the idea of proving oneself to be a citizen as insulting. How dare some government worker not accept the word of a gentleman?! Even the customs officials disputed the need for such a thing, fancying themselves experts at just \*knowing\* if a fellow was telling the truth or not. All in all, it's an interesting story about how the passport has evolved in America. Four stars, would be more but as I said, the writing style makes it a slow read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Who Knew??? By B. A. Smith. . . that once upon a time, people thought passports were an invasion of privacy? An absolutely wonderful resource for my research. Written in language easily understood. Much appreciated 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thorough, but tedious By A. Jones Half the pages are footnotes! This book is a dissertation on the history of the US passport, and in that sense the book is absolutely what it claims to be. However, if you aren't really interested in how every Secretary of State handled passport applications thru the Second World War, you may find that the author exhausts the subject pretty early.

In today's world of constant identification checks, it's difficult to recall that there was ever a time when "proof of identity" was not a part of everyday life. And as anyone knows who has ever lost a passport, or let one expire on the eve of international travel, the passport has become an indispensable document. But how and why did this form of identification take on such a crucial role? In the first history of the passport in the United States, Craig Robertson offers an illuminating account of how this document, above all others, came to be considered a reliable answer to the question: who are you? Historically, the passport originated as an official letter of introduction addressed to foreign governments on behalf of American travelers, but as Robertson shows, it became entangled in contemporary negotiations over citizenship and other forms of identity documentation. Prior to World War I, passports were not required to cross American borders, and while some people struggled to understand how a passport could accurately identify a person, others took advantage of this new document to advance claims for citizenship. From the strategic use of passport applications by freed slaves and a campaign to allow married women to get passports in their maiden names, to the "passport nuisance" of the 1920s and the contested addition of photographs and other identification technologies on the passport, Robertson sheds new light on issues of individual and national identity in modern U.S. history. In this age of heightened security, especially at international borders, Robertson's *The Passport in America* provides anyone interested in questions of identification and surveillance with a richly detailed, and often surprising, history of this uniquely important document.

From Booklist Robertson accomplishes a surprising amount with a seemingly dusty subject in this far-reaching social history. From early discussions of a document authorizing travel to civilized states, along with the politics of determining who was civilized and who wasn't, he points out the many ways in which passport law has stepped ahead of national and personal identities. He recalls the early difficulty in translating Chinese names (dismissed as ill adapted for pronouncing and writing by the majority of Americans in 1917) and the problem of how to establish accurate physical descriptions of individuals in the era before photography. Robertson clearly relishes such side issues, veering with great aplomb into the history of birth certificates and the debate over why women would need passports since they always traveled with their husbands. Ultimately, the passport serves as an umbrella sheltering many aspects of the cultural past. Illustrated with numerous examples, Robertson's history of the significance of one small document starts slowly but builds steam and expands into a broad and relevant chronicle. --Colleen Mondor "Cleverly uses the history of the American passport as a means to plumb the meanings of identity and identification as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.... Theoretically grounded and engagingly written it will appeal to scholars interested in the history of national border controls and the transnational movement of people, as well as those interested in questions surrounding the intersection of state power, citizenship, and modernity." --American Historical "Robertson's superb book combines serious scholarship and an easily accessible narrative.... It displays the great immigration themes in U.S. history--identity, sovereignty, membership, national security, privacy, federalism, bi-national communities, and the attempts of overwhelmed government officials to enforce the law--through the lens of the humble passport." --Donald Kerwin, *International Migration* "Provocative..." --*The New York Times* "Robertson accomplishes a surprising amount with a seemingly dusty subject in this far-reaching social history." --Booklist "Robertson takes fascinating excursions into the history of currency, voting, immigration, tourism and even filing methods.... *The Passport in America* is compelling reading." --*The Wilson Quarterly* "A skillful excavation of the historical foundations of this bureaucratic procedure." --Bookforum "Making use of the mundane and innocuous passport, Robertson takes readers along an intriguing and exciting journey of recasting.... An excellent narrative." --CHOICE "Robertson deftly weaves together the numerous legal challenges, policy shifts, and human dramas that have shaped [the passport].... [E]ngrossing." --*Law and History* "In addition to providing a detailed history of the passport from the late eighteenth century to the mid-1930s, *The Passport in America* describes a parallel history, at least as interesting and important, of the idea of civil identity in an evolving bourgeois democracy." --William W. Stowe, *Journal of American History* "This fine book will serve as the standard history of the American passport, at least during its crucial formative

period, for some time to come."--Journal of Social History About the Author Craig Robertson is Associate Professor of Communication Studies, Northeastern University.