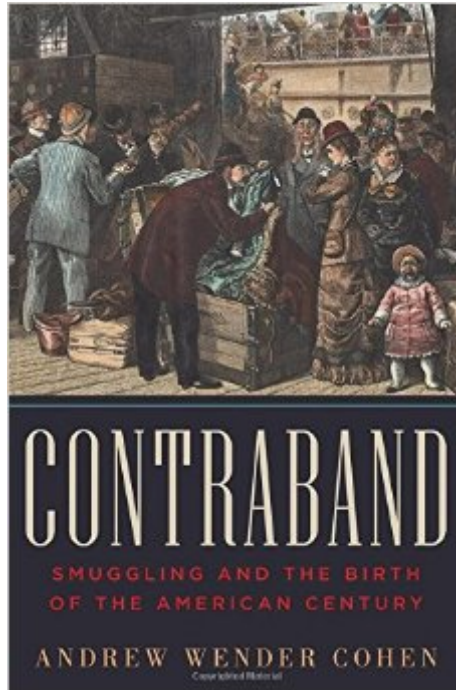


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Contraband: Smuggling And The Birth Of The American Century



Synopsis

How skirting the law once defined America's relation to the world. In the frigid winter of 1875, Charles L. Lawrence made international headlines when he was arrested for smuggling silk worth \$60 million into the United States. An intimate of Boss Tweed, gloriously dubbed "The Prince of Smugglers," and the head of a network spanning four continents and lasting half a decade, Lawrence scandalized a nation whose founders themselves had once dabbled in contraband. Since the Revolution itself, smuggling had tested the patriotism of the American people. Distrusting foreign goods, Congress instituted high tariffs on most imports. Protecting the nation was the custom house, which waged a "war on smuggling," inspecting every traveler for illicitly imported silk, opium, tobacco, sugar, diamonds, and art. The Civil War's blockade of the Confederacy heightened the obsession with contraband, but smuggling entered its prime during the Gilded Age, when characters like assassin Louis Biala, economist "The Parsee Merchant," Congressman Ben Butler, and actress Rose Eytinge tempted consumers with illicit foreign luxuries. Only as the United States became a global power with World War I did smuggling lose its scurvy romance. Meticulously researched, *Contraband* explores the history of smuggling to illuminate the broader history of the United States, its power, its politics, and its culture. 20 illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Remarkable study of smuggling, which illustrates how Americans related to the world from the Founding to World War I. From the beginning, the United States sought to build nationalism by limiting their own ability to trade with foreigners. But at the same time, Americans like Charles L.

Lawrence defied customs authorities, insisting that trade be free. The government responded by building a potent army of customs inspectors and treasury agents, who profiled Jews, Asians, and women in the pursuit of tariff revenues. Beautifully written, the author uses the stories of smugglers like Jean Lafitte, Charles L. Lawrence, and Rose Eytinge to illustrate not only the history of Protectionism, but also the rise of American empire and the development of the modern social safety net. He shows that the tariff was far from an unpopular relic, but rather the foundation of the nineteenth century state.

Great story, which follows the career of smuggler Charlie Lawrence, and an important, sweeping interpretation of the U.S. and the world in the nineteenth century.

Good book but tough to get through. Hard to follow all the actors. Great topic and good background on the U.S. Post civil war

More about the evolution of customs (import) duties (taxes) than any individual. Not a great read, but ok. For those interested in the nitty gritty of our (American) history.

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