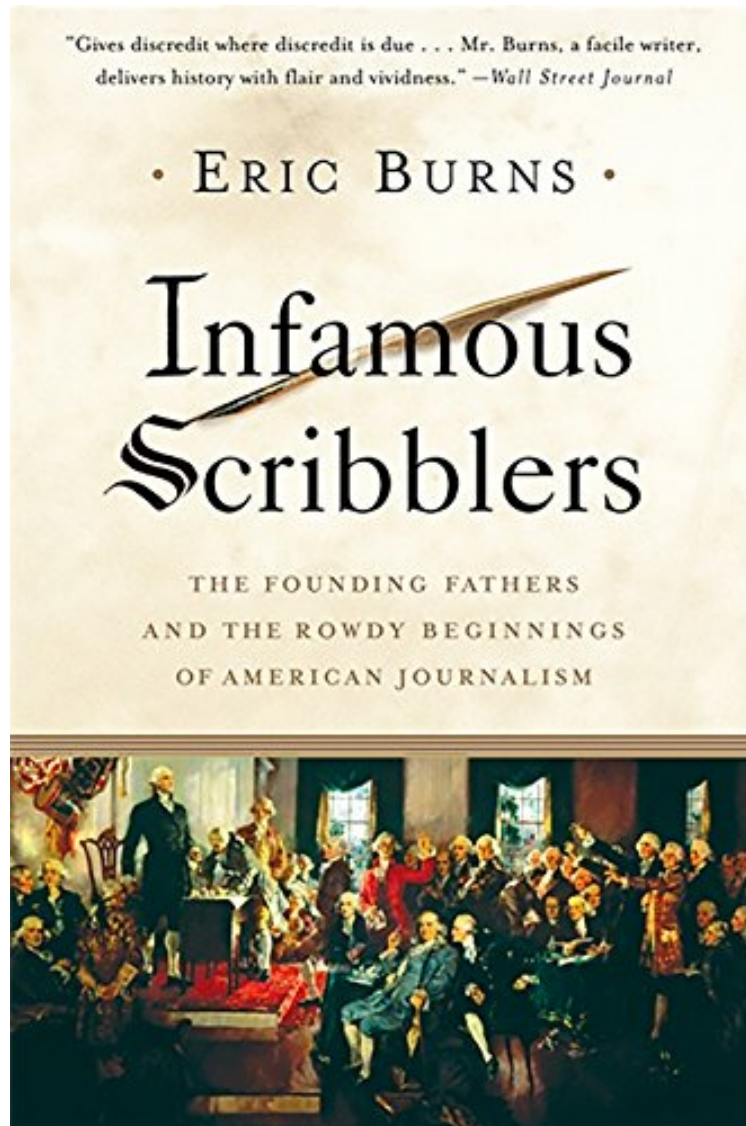


Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism

Eric Burns

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Eric Burns : Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It arrived timely and in excellent condition. It was an excellent surprise and a ...By ButAPoorCollegeStudentThis book was purchased as a gift. It arrived timely and in excellent

condition. It was an excellent surprise and a great read, according to the person that I gifted this book to. It is a bit wordy, but for people that enjoy learning about American history from a rather unusual approach, this book is excellent. Instead of focusing on dates and names, it introduces a ton of excellent theories on the topic of American journalism in a unique voice and offers plenty of entertainment for readers of most skill levels. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Press Has Been Merciless Since the Founding By Alex McGuire Reporting about politics negatively is nothing new. It was so bad, in the beginning, that Adams created a law to forbid it. Jefferson hated that law until he got to his second term as President. Then, he wished that he hadn't got rid of the law in his first term. His hypocrisy, it appears, was not just limited to his ideas about slavery. Great book if you want to understand how unchanged the press is, since our country was founded. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A revealing history By Kenneth Umbach Readable, illuminating narrative. No matter how bad or biased you might think journalism is today, current shortcomings pale by comparison with what Burns documents. The story also gives insights into the origins of American party politics and an unvarnished look at some of the Founding Fathers.

Infamous Scribblers is a perceptive and witty exploration of the most volatile period in the history of the American press. News correspondent and renowned media historian Eric Burns tells of Ben Franklin, Alexander Hamilton and Sam Adams the leading journalists among the Founding Fathers; of George Washington and John Adams, the leading disdainers of journalists; and Thomas Jefferson, the leading manipulator of journalists. These men and the writers who abused and praised them in print (there was, at the time, no job description of "journalist") included the incendiary James Franklin, Ben's brother and one of the first muckrakers; the high minded Thomas Paine; the hatchet man James Callender, and a rebellious crowd of propagandists, pamphleteers, and publishers. It was Washington who gave this book its title. He once wrote of his dismay at being "buffeted in the public prints by a set of infamous scribblers." The journalism of the era was often partisan, fabricated, overheated, scandalous, sensationalistic and sometimes stirring, brilliant, and indispensable. Despite its flaws even because of some of them the participants hashed out publicly the issues that would lead America to declare its independence and, after the war, to determine what sort of nation it would be.

From Publishers Weekly Considering the many noble accomplishments of early American culture, Burns observes, the levels of vulgarity and partisanship in colonial newspapers should strike modern readers as shocking. Given the ideological jousting taking place on talk radio and in the blogosphere today, he may be overstating the case, and at times the condemnation feels as if it's laid on a bit thick, but Burns's historical examples of journalistic excess rabid language, character assassination, even outright fabrication never bore. From the sniping feuds among Boston's first papers to sex scandals involving Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, the snappy patter gives clear indication of how much Burns, a Fox News anchor and accomplished historian (*The Spirits of America*), relishes telling his story. With so much attention on the Founding Fathers in recent years, many sections, like those on Ben Franklin's early publishing career and the intense rivalry between Jefferson and Hamilton, each of whom underwrote a paper to propagate his point of view, will be familiar. For every recognizable anecdote, however, Burns weaves in fresh elements like the vicious feud between publisher James Franklin (Ben's older brother) and Cotton Mather over smallpox inoculation, keeping the entertainment levels high. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Grievances against journalists are as old as America--Burns' title is lifted from an epistolary lamentation by none other than George Washington. Most of the founders found themselves on the receiving end of printers who reveled in calumny and condemnation and made no pretense of impartiality. Burns' chronological narrative spans the century between what is regarded as the first newspaper in America, *Publick Occurrences* of 1690s Boston, and the partisan papers of Thomas Jefferson's presidency. Burns, a broadcast journalist, adopts a flowing, anecdote-laden style infused with bemusement toward the period's reportorial practices. These included outright fabrication, lightly so, as in Benjamin Franklin's occasional inventions in print, or more seriously, as in fulminations against the British by patriot Samuel Adams. Come the Revolution, Burns notes that most papers went under due to a paper shortage; after the War of Independence, they reappeared with vigor and invective. Excerpting extensively from the newspapers under discussion, Burns has produced a spry history of early American journalism. Gilbert Taylor Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "a rousing history of early American journalism." -- *Journal-Gazette and Times-Courier (IL)* "an entertaining account of where we came from" -- *Claremont of Books*, Winter 2006/2007