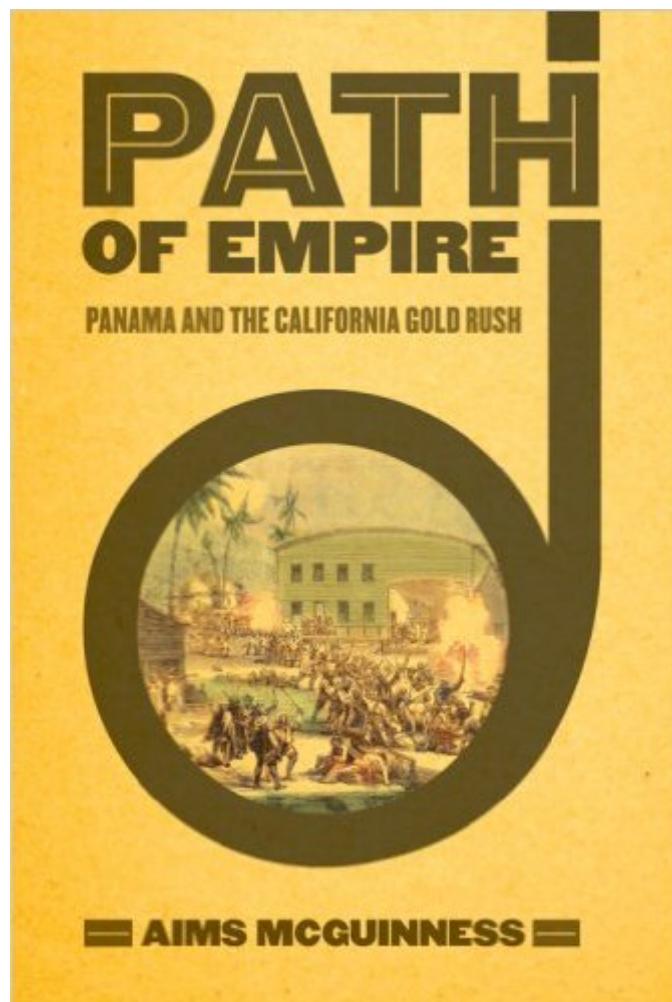


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Path Of Empire: Panama And The California Gold Rush (The United States In The World)



Synopsis

Most people in the United States have forgotten that tens of thousands of U.S. citizens migrated westward to California by way of Panama during the California Gold Rush. Decades before the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, this slender spit of land abruptly became the linchpin of the fastest route between New York City and San Francisco—a route that combined travel by ship to the east coast of Panama, an overland crossing to Panama City, and a final voyage by ship to California. In *Path of Empire*, Aims McGuinness presents a novel understanding of the intertwined histories of the California Gold Rush, the course of U.S. empire, and anti-imperialist politics in Latin America. Between 1848 and 1856, Panama saw the building, by a U.S. company, of the first transcontinental railroad in world history, the final abolition of slavery, the establishment of universal manhood suffrage, the foundation of an autonomous Panamanian state, and the first of what would become a long list of military interventions by the United States. Using documents found in Panamanian, Colombian, and U.S. archives, McGuinness reveals how U.S. imperial projects in Panama were integral to developments in California and the larger process of U.S. continental expansion. *Path of Empire* offers a model for the new transnational history by unbinding the gold rush from the confines of U.S. history as traditionally told and narrating that event as the history of Panama, a small place of global importance in the mid-1800s.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When we think of "our" history--whether of "our" country or our personal history, WE--or "our"

country--are the center of attention. We may mention other people and other nations as part of the story--how they affected us--but rarely and usually sketchily--do we consider how an event in our history affects the development of someone else or another country. However, there seems to be a new trend with historians called transnational history--recognizing that no person or no country is an isolated identity, and that the actions of the central player(s) on the stage--us, the US, say--can strongly affect the destinies of others. This is the point of view taken by Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush. I never really thought much about the California gold rush except that it happened and that it contributed significantly to the development of the West. I knew in a sort of vague way that there were some people from other nations who also arrived in California for the gold rush, but I had no idea how many--always thought it was pretty much Americans. Until I read Isabel Allende's Daughter of Fortune, I had no idea how many people from Latin America made their way to California hoping to become rich--and I also had no idea just how brutally they were treated. In the same fashion, I thought most Americans traveled by the Overland Trail in covered wagons. I had read that some came by ship, but since there was no canal at that time, I had no idea how important the transisthmus route across Panama was, not only in ferrying people from the Atlantic side to the Pacific on their way to California, but in transporting people and gold in the opposite direction.

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