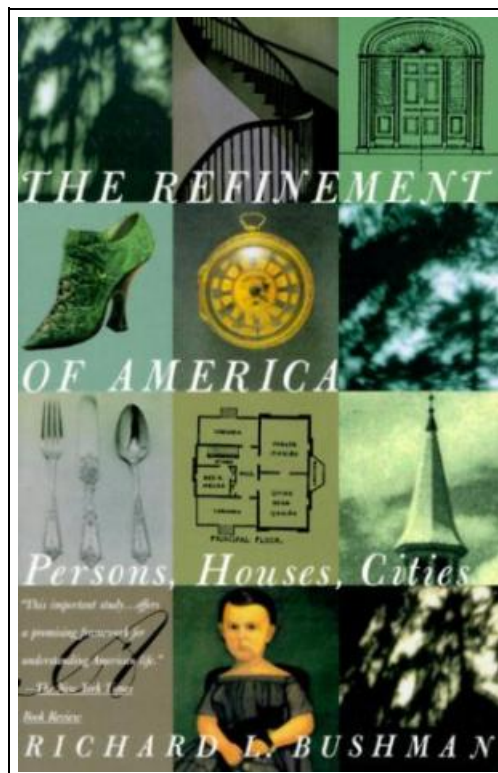


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Reviews

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Random House USA Inc, United States, 1994. Paperback. Condition: New. Reprint. Language: English . Brand New Book. In this illuminating analysis of early American society, Richard Bushman traces the introduction of gentility into the life of the nation. He explores the concern for stylishness, taste, beauty, and politeness that began to be felt in America after 1700, and examines how this concern changed our environment and culture. Bushman makes clear that the quest for gentility, far from being trivial, was the serious pursuit of a personal and social ideal with sources in classical and Renaissance literature. In Europe, the growing interest in manners and beautiful environments was connected to the power of royal courts. In America, the transformation of architecture, furnishings, and wardrobes - from plain, rudimentary, and frugal, to decorative and sumptuous - was linked to the transfer of power to the colonial gentry. Gentility was the culture of the colonies ruling elite. After the Revolution, gentility spread to a broad middle class, as an essentially aristocratic culture was democratized. The change affected nearly every aspect of life. The spread of gentility turned the conduct of ordinary people into a performance. Courtesy books taught people how to hold their bodies, and how to dress, eat, and converse in a pleasing way. The wish to be pleasing came to encompass virtually every form of behavior and every aspect of the physical environment, from houses and yards to public buildings and the adornment of streets. Factories sprang up to supply a vast new market for furniture, dishes, curtains, and carpets. Cities and towns planted trees, landscaped parks and greens, and erected fashionable hotels and churches. All of these developments were part of a vast effort to present a refined faceto the world and to create a new kind of society. Bushman...



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